

THE STEEL NAPOLEON—An Iron Fist Ruled The Universe

AMAZING AND STORIES

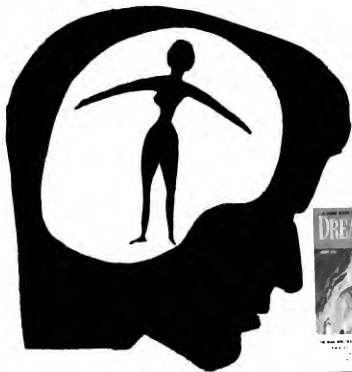
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BY THE EDITOR

LUCKY YOU!

• Almost everyone at one time or another has yearned to live in some other age in order to escape from what seems at times to be a boring, humdrum existence. You yourself have no doubt been attracted to some glamorous period of history, so let's take a look at a few.

The glory that was Rome for instance. How glorious was it? If death is glorious, so was Rome. Human life meant nothing. Entertainment consisted of humans killed and eaten by animals; men killed by other men; a vanquished general dragged to death behind a conqueror's chariot was a signal for a Roman holiday. Compassion and charity were unknown. This was glory?

Let's take a look at the glittering courts of the French Louies; that time of beautiful women and gallant bewigged men. Glamorous? They squirted perfume all over the place to deaden the stench of unwashed bodies. They invented fans as a device for the hiding of broken, blackened teeth of "glamorous beauties." There was a reason why they smiled behind their fans. And the brilliant, slashing swordplay of the musketeers. What about that? Quick, clean death in the heat of combat? No. More Frenchmen died ignobly from infected scratches than were dispatched by a heart-thrust. This was glamor?

Take any period down through history and the answer is the same—you live in the best of possible times—in the finest of possible worlds. So don't worry about the cold war, or the daily frustrations that come and go. Forget about high taxes. Anyone living in nineteen previous centuries would have been delighted to pay them. Lucky you!

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THE STEEL NAPOLEON

By HARLAN ELLISON

That sad, happy, attractive, repelling, Utopian, chaotic World of Tomorrow! What will it really be like? Of course we can't know, but we can predict. And that brings us to this great action story—in which Mr. Ellison predicts that tomorrow's world will hold a great future for juvenile delinquents.

WILLIAM B. FUHR took pride in the fact that way back there somewhere—in a time before there were inverspace ships, in fact before there were cars or planes—one of his descendants was Billy the Kid.

It was that, perhaps, which had led him swiftly away from his training as a ship's pharmacist, and into the Gunman's Guild. But whether it had been that lone fact, or the daily danger that confronted him as a resident of Slobtown, in a matter of two years—by the time he was twenty-two years old—Billy Fuhr had come the crack dead

shot of all Slobtown; and they had heard of him in Moneyville.

Working for Sloth Leekman—undisputed racket boss of Slobtown—Billy turned twenty-two with twenty-nine killings under his belt. Nine of them women, and one a thirteen-year-old spring-knife expert riding shotgun on Below Tracey's gin-wagon. He had often regretted puncturing the kid, but he'd caught him going through Sloth's territory on the gin-wagon, and it had been either a bullet for the kid—or a sliced throat for Billy.

It was, in fact, the day after his twenty-second birthday that the hooded musclers from Moneyville came down into the shacks and mud-holes of Slobtown. To find Billy.

He caught two of them with the Magnum, and one with the .72 before they swarmed over him and tapped him behind the ear with a lead-wound sap.

Through the descending fog of unconsciousness, Billy felt the remaining fifteen black-clad musclers lift him and drop him into the enclosing bubble-seat of a thruway robot-controlled trundler.

Just as the cockpit sighed down pneumatically over him, he heard the gutter-gangs pil-

ing out of the ruined houses, caves, shattered store-fronts, descending on the musclers. He heard the snap of sling-shots driving glass slivers, and the pop of zip-guns, and the screams of the black-clad men. And even as the acceleration pressed him back into deeper unconsciousness, up against the padded seats of the landcar, he got a tiny flicker of joy in knowing they'd never get back to their wealthy boss in Moneyville, whoever he might be.

The trundler car skirted the bomb holes and the blasted fragments, all that remained of what had been New York City, before.

Before the Eastern Bloc had set off the Great War. Before the needle-nosed rockets had come over and split the land. Before the death and the plagues and the starvation. Before those who had survived on top built Moneyville, and condemned the rest to supplying them, to living in Slobtown. It had become a hard world in which to live, and as William Fuhr came abruptly awake, he saw jagged reminders of that world. The jagged skyline that remained of the City.

He sat up, and realized he was held in place by three thin

metal arms, protruding from apertures in the robot control panel. He struggled for a moment, but only succeeded in ripping a hole in his vest. Then he cursed loudly, for the vest had been the best one available from Dingo the Bullet Man. It had stopped plenty of slugs from zips down in Slobtown, and had set him back a month's paycheck from Sloth Leekman.

Abruptly, as they swung around a corner, on which stood the shattered stump of a building, he caught sight of the shining, shimmering expanse of Moneyville. It stretched into the sky, with pillars and towers of brilliant reds, greens, violets, golds, silvers. The towers were encrusted with artificial diamonds, and the city glimmered like the nights of stars. He watched it with growing amazement. The force barrier had kept him out all these twenty-two years, kept out everyone from Slobtown, in fact, for much longer. Now here he was, riding right up and into it.

Even as he thought that, the force barrier glowed before them, and the cockpit of the trundler was opaqued. He assumed it was so he could not tell where the entrance point was.

He was forced to stare at his own reflection, cast upon the reflective inner surface of the cab.

He saw a face that looked younger than its years, yet somehow, older. He saw his mouth, with the faint white scar running up from its left corner. He had gotten *that* one during an election rumble with the Panthers from the East Side. He saw the nose that had been three times broken by thrown missiles. He saw the heavy eyebrows and the lank dark hair that hung over his face. The strong chin, the broad shoulders, the scars that lined his features.

After a long while, he got fed up with staring at himself, and slipped off to sleep. The purring of the trundler's engines lulled him quickly.

While he slept, the trundler slipped through the barrier.

The ceaseless purring of the trundler's engines cut out, and Billy woke up with a start. The hood of the landcar was still opaqued, but he knew the machine had stopped. A moment later the cab became transparent once more, then lifted, and sank into the body of the trundler. The robot arms unclamped themselves.

He sat up and looked around. He was inside a build-

ing, and the bright yellow of the walls was so brilliant it made him blink several times. From a series of louvres in the walls, he felt the breeze blowing in—good across his face after the stuffiness of the sealed cab.

The building seemed to be circular with nothing in it but a transparent tube that ran up through the center, and disappeared through the ceiling. Billy slipped out of the trundler and felt the faint prickling of his skin telling him he was being spy-beamed. He took a few steps.

"Take the tube up, we have it set." It was a hollow, wooden voice and Billy spotted the ceiling speaker at once. He did not, however, step to the lift tube. Instead, he walked around the perimeter of the building, looking for a way out.

"You're being watched," the voice said. Billy looked up, knowing the spies were catching his every expression. He finished his patrol of the wall. Nothing. He went back to the trundler, and tried to pry open its hood. He needed a weapon; a drive rod, a snap of wire, a chunk of metal, anything. But the hood was locked, and the landcar was empty.

"Satisfied, Mr. Fuhr?" the voice said.

He wasn't, but there was nothing he could do. His fist ached for something to hold; the cool butt of a .72 or the handle of a triple-edged knife. But he had nothing, and now he was going to have to use a different approach than the one that proved valuable in Slobtown. Violence pure and simple was the criterion out there . . . but this was Moneyville.

He walked slowly toward the shaft, and opened the sphincter in its side with a wave of his hand. The suction of the tube drew at him, and he spread his hands absently, just to be making a motion, just to be putting off the rise in the tube.

"We're waiting, Fuhr," the voice reminded him. He stepped into the tube and was drawn up immediately, and the suck-power neutralized itself on his body, just as he rose abreast of a second sphincter. He opened it, and stepped out, what he assumed to be at least twenty floors above the ground.

The room was as large as the lower one, of course; but instead of the solid brilliant yellow walls, windows from floor to ceiling, separated by pillars that glittered like many-colored jewels, con-

fronted him. The room was a hodge-podge of geometric figures. All of them were jeweled and glittering. Some were functional tables, chairs, vid-boxes, and cabinets. Others were just decoration. But the glare was tremendous, for the sun shone in through the windows, and its light ricocheted from every facet, making a terrible glare in Billy's eyes.

It was the glare that prevented his seeing the man for more than a minute.

A voice came out of the glare, told him to sit down. "The hell!" Billy rasped, and stepped to the side, hoping to escape the glare.

"Mr. Fuhr, I went to a great deal of trouble to have my employees find you, and it would be most unpleasant to have to burn you down before I put a proposition to you. Now—do you sit down, or do I turn on the beams that are focussed on you?" The voice was no longer hollow and loud. In fact, it was a mere whisper, caught up with a rasping edge that sounded like sun-charred grass scratching against the ground. An old voice, a very old voice.

Billy Fuhr walked carefully toward one of the cubistic nightmares serving for a chair. He walked, springing off the balls of his feet, as he

had learned to do in tight places, and sat down only with trepidation.

As he sat down, his eyes passed out of the glare area, and he saw the owner of the ancient voice. The man looked like a pixie.

His face was a wrinkled, nut-brown, that came down to a point at the chin. The eyes were thin slits, that wrinkled from one corner to the other. His nose was tiny and tilted impishly and Billy was certain his ears came to points.

But the mouth belied all the good humor of the rest of him. It was queerly gashed, indicating nothing but malice. The man was no taller than four feet, and he sat high up in a chair that reminded Billy of a solidly-built life guard's seat at the beach.

Billy slowly swung his eyes around. Trying to find the location of the beam apertures, in case he had to duck and run. Perhaps he could escape their direct-line fire before they could swivel. "You won't see them, Mr. Fuhr," the pixie-man said. "They are in areas of strongest glare.

"Now. If you've convinced yourself that you are quite helpless, perhaps we can get down to business. I want to hire you."

Billy lashed out in retaliation, "Don't never tell me I'm helpless. I'm Billy Fuhr, and way back I was sired by Billy Bonney. You know who that was?"

The pixie-man chuckled dryly. His evil mouth twitched as he replied: "Mr. Fuhr, whatever you are, you are *not* descended from Billy the Kid. Bonney never married; however, I can easily believe you might be a bastard descendant. It fits you well."

Billy was out of the chair. His fists lashed out. He swung for the pixie-man's legs, hoping to pull him down before the beams flashed. It was irrational but that was the only thing he had left—his heritage. That, and his gunman-ship. No can could assault him so, and live.

He stumbled forward. His hands almost closed about the pixie-man's legs. Almost. Not quite. As they came within a fraction of an inch of the tight body-trousers, green lightning erupted from nowhere.

Billy screamed as the lightning built and flowed and leaped from floor to body and back again. It arced over him, and drew every follicle of lank brown hair straight erect. His eyeballs started from his head,

and he fell back, stock-rooted and rigid, legs apart, arms up-thrust, as though he were being crucified.

The pain was excruciating. It was a weird combination of electricity and something else, something nameless. Every stretch of flesh on his body was lit with pain; a billion exploring needles of unbelievable sharpness stuck and stuck and pierced again, right to the center of his body; right to the arch of his groin, right to the pulmonary artery of his heart. He gagged and then he was a writhing mass of jelly on the floor. And still the lightning did not stop. Over its hiss and roar he heard someone scream. He realized it was he himself.

At that moment the bolts ceased, and he lay wet, bloody and aching—on the floor at the pixie-man's feet. There was no resistance left.

The pixie-man's cackle came to him clearly, and despite the pain he felt the hatred rising in him, and he swore someday to put his hands to that papyrus throat, and squeeze squeeze squeeze. . . .

"And now let's talk, Mr. Fuhr. My spies told me you were the one person in Slobtown who had some sense of achievement, of desire for power and position. Is that

true, Mr. Fuhr? Or have I wasted my time on you?"

Billy Fuhr willed himself to rise to his elbows. He stared up and for a minute his eyes were blind from the lightning attack. Then, slowly, mistily, his vision returned, and the fierce agony passed from him like cool water rolling off a stone. He sat up, and rose to his feet.

The pixie-man crossed his pipestem legs, and put a speculative twist on his mouth. "You seem to have recovered from my shield more quickly than most. Despite your adolescent manner, that is a good sign."

"Who are you?"

The pixie-man put a finger to his thin lips. "Now, now. I dislike noise intensely, Mr. Fuhr, and much more of it from you will force me to fry you permanently."

Billy felt helpless. It was chilling; knowing he could neither move nor stand still, neither come nor go. He was here, and he was at the mercy of the little brown-skinned man on the high chair.

The pixie-man said, "My name is Farquar. I own this tower, and several others. Have you ever heard of me?"

There was an anxious pleading quality to his voice, as

though it meant a great deal to him that down in Slobtown his name was known. Billy shook his head. The pixie-man adjusted his expression to compensate for his obvious disappointment.

"No mind, no mind. I'm well enough known in Moneyville. I have you here because *your* name has come to me on several occasions. I hear you are good with the gun? Is that true?"

Billy had regained much of his arrogance. It was all he had left to show. Inside he quivered. "Good? Just hand me something, anything, even a pop-gun, and I'll blow away the front of your kisser."

Farquar gloated. "Fine, fine. Just the attitude I desire." He leaned forward earnestly.

"Mr. Fuhr, how would you like to get out of Slobtown? How would you like to live in splendor and wealth all the rest of your miserable life? How would you like to avoid the skirmishes for food and a sleeping-place, have all the women and fine clothes you want?"

Billy thought it sounded like a wild dream. Either the old man was insane, or he had been jamming on hero-coke. It was impossible, that's what it was; the Slobtowners stayed

and lived and died dirty in Slobtown, and the richers played and idled and were cremated ceremonially in Moneyville; and never the twain would meet.

"It sounds lousy, that's how it sounds!" Billy snapped, turning away.

Farquar's brittle tones bit out at him. "Face me when I speak to you, Mr. Fuhr. I dislike rudeness almost as much as I dislike noise."

Billy turned back. There was an odd pleading in the old man's eyes. "Well, it is within your reach, Mr. Fuhr. No matter how much you protest and fight it, I'm sure the idea appeals to you. Consequently, I'm willing to offer you just that; a place here in Moneyville. A title, a home, and all the resources you could ever hope for.

"I'm more than just very wealthy, Fuhr. I'm one of the ruling class of this city. The rich do my bidding. But I now find myself in the hopeless position of having to come to a guttercrawl like you. Now, do we talk business, or do I burn you down? I dislike having to crawl to the likes of you!"

His hand strayed to make the firing motion.

Billy knew he had no choice. The pixie-man named Far-

quar sipped daintily at a plate of *vichysoisse*. From time to time he looked up and cocked his brown little head at Billy Fuhr. "Eat, Mr. Fuhr. Eat. No one can adequately talk business on an empty stomach."

He smiled engagingly, but Billy's mind was too-freshly scarred by the sadistic application of the shield, and he would not give Farquar even the satisfaction of accepting food. He sat solidly in the geometric nightmare, his dark eyes in their pools of shadow steadily watching the man in the high chair. Farquar had too much power. Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Though he did not know the saying, the concept was all too clear to William Bonney Fuhr.

Someone would have to do something heavy about the pixie-man. Billy had ample reason to believe *he* would be the one. If he was ever given the opportunity.

Farquar polished off the soup, wiped his slash mouth with a delicately-laced napkin, and snapped his fingers. The tray on its thin steel shank slid down into the floor and was gone.

"Now," he said, leaning back and folding his wire-thin brown fingers over his in-

drawn belly. "Now. We were about to discuss your employment."

"I haven't said yet that I *want* you to employ me." Billy let the words out with a snarl.

"You have one minute to make up your mind, I'll fool around with your petty pride no longer."

It did not take Billy the entire minute to decide.

"Good," Farquar said. "Now here is my problem. My daughter Roxella—you will find a photoblok of her in the drawer of that table beside you—has disappeared. I know where she is, but I have been unable to get to her."

He paused as Billy palmed open the drawer of the geometric table, and drew out the photoblok. Encased in the prismatic clearness was a three-dimensional figure three inches high. Perhaps the most beautiful woman Billy Fuhr had ever seen. Her hair was long and golden, hanging to her shoulders with that smooth silken quality that makes a man feel it was grown just to be touched. Her body was straight and firm, and her eyes were a sharp, snapping brown that indicated a strong will and sharp intellect.

"She's very beautiful," he mumbled.

Farquar's face darkened,

and his hand strayed in a twitch toward the fire-beams. "*That* is none of your concern, Slobman. She is of no concern to you at all, save that you rescue her. That is what you are here for. And if you have any idea of her that exceeds what I've just said, forget it immediately. If you ever touch her, I'll make certain you die in a way that will make the lightning shield seem like heaven on Earth. Do you understand?"

Billy Fuhr stared silently. He understood, and the idea of the death Farquar outlined made him sick inside. The terrible memory of the shield had still not passed.

Farquar was still not satisfied. His temples jumped as he leaned forward and strained a hoarse, "*Do you understand, Fuhr?*"

"I understand."

"What? I can't hear you. Say it louder, and remember it!"

"I understand, I understand, for God's sake!"

Farquar settled back. He was breathing with difficulty. "She's all I have in this world. She means more to me than my towers or my influence or anything. If she were to come to harm, I would kill myself."

His voice faltered, and a

slim, tight-skinned hand passed across his eyes. "I've had a very trying time the past two months. She was outward bound to Rorak's Nebula on an inspection tour of my mining interests on Five, Seventeen and Twenty-nine. Somewhere out past the planet Balboa in the Iris VII sector—you know of it? No, how *could* you? You scum barely know our ships ply space still—the liner disappeared. She, and everyone else on board—in fact, the ship itself, vanished. I sent out many—"

"How do you know it vanished?" Billy asked.

Farquar's eyebrows went up. "When a ship sends a transpace distress signal for an hour, and then snaps off in the middle of a code, it is safe to assume they are in trouble. When that ship does not show up the next day at the next port of call, it is safe to assume it is lost. I wouldn't have you here if I wasn't certain it was lost, and that my daughter was in trouble."

Billy nodded.

"I sent out thirty different search-ships. Each of them have sent back a definite distress message, and none of them have returned. But my associates have triangulated the points of origin of the messages, and they place

the distress area somewhere around Balboa. There is obviously something there that is not entirely elemental, and it has my daughter. If you can bring her back, everything I promised you is yours."

Billy sat quite still and thought about it. There was a great future here, if he was to believe what Farquar said. No more grubbing and killing in the filth of Slobtown; the opportunity to enjoy the amenities and pleasures he had been denied all his life. Wealth, ease, position. And then, too, there was Roxella.

"Tell me what you know."

Farquar settled back and told him. It was not much. The liner had gone down—supposedly on Balboa, about which nothing was known—and thirty other ships had followed it.

"How soon can I start?"

"Immediately. Take the tube down. It's set for the labs, where they will outfit you."

Then, as the last words left the pixie-man's mouth, the body jerked, his hands fell limply, and Farquar slipped off the chair. He fell to the floor and lay there, like a de-stringed puppet.

Billy jumped up and went to him. He stooped down and

lifted one hand. It was more than cold: it was flaccid and empty of life. It was the hand of a mannequin.

From nowhere and everywhere in the room, the voice of Farquar, deeper than before, rapped out. "You didn't think I'd trust myself in the same room with a guttercrawl like you, did you?"

Billy's jaw muscles leaped, and he slammed the doll's hand back to the floor. He stood up and viciously kicked at the dummy. Farquar's laughter was a live thing in the room.

"By the way, Mr. Fuhr," the nowhere-everywhere voice jibed, "how *did* Billy the Kid die? Shot in the back?"

Billy turned and sneered. "I don't know."

The tube carried him softly, swiftly, downstairs.

Billy took a plop to sleep away the trip to the Iris VII sector. The plop-cap went down heavily, and lay in the pit of his stomach for a long time; long after he had cut grav on the ship and fallen asleep hanging in mid-air, in his padded cabin.

Farquar had been as good as his word. The labs downstairs in the tower had been more than prepared. They had stripped him out of his soggy

vest and stripped-cloth rags, and bathed him completely. When they had released him from the needle-baths, he felt more eased and agile than he had in many months. Then they wheeled him into a surgery lab, and when he had seen the bright, needled instruments, had tried to get off the rolling table. Three lab-men had held him down, and chocked the table in place. Straps had then been fastened, and the lab-men had spoken softly to him, assuring him nothing damaging was being done. Then one of the many-pronged instruments descended, a needle entered his bicep, and he was cold in an instant.

When he had come to, nothing seemed different. The straps had been removed, and he felt just fine. Then they had shown him the extent of their surgery: a flap of skin had been removed; the mass of veins, cartilage, nerve fiber and arteries had been moved aside and compressed, and a semi-circular piece of some non-metallic substance inserted. In the trough of the piece, they had laid a deadly thousand-shot stinger, with its trigger on safety. Then they had laid the skin flap back—it was now some sort of pseudo-flesh—and Billy had watched it suck itself back into place

without a break. There was no way of telling he carried a lethal weapon on his person. The labmen had told him the gun was entirely made of scan-proof plastics with printed circuits and gelatin charges . . . it would escape any sort of detecting devices.

At the same time, while Billy had been under sedation, the conditioning had gone in, and now, as they asked him test questions, he found he could pilot a spaceship with ease. Vectors, charge-velocities, trajectories, power-potentials, force-equivalents, astrogation — everything was deeply implanted.

Then he had been clothed, and driven out to the spaceport.

At the port he had been loaded aboard a sleek, small inverspace ship with the name *Iowa Farquar* on its prow. The comp charts had gone with him, and he had noted—from his new fund of information—that they were already checked, punched and triple-coded with settings for Iris VII's sector, and sub-coded for Balboa.

Then the blast-off, and now he hung sleeping, turning slowly with every directional breeze from the air-cleansing units. From time to time he would bump a wall and mutter

in his rest, but his dark brown hair hung out in all directions wildly, and his close-rigged mesh-suit bunched only where it was loose about biceps and ankles. He slept on as the ship plunged through inverspace, cutting across the light-years as though they were non-existent.

From time to time, Moneyville newsfax sheets had been smuggled into Slobtown; there had been an occasional book, also, with imperfectly reproduced two-D photos of several planets. But from memory Billy could not recall ever having seen a planet as strange as Balboa.

The huge view-ball that hung above the course-comp glowed brightly. In its depths, on its surface, the image of space deep and crowded with stars was subservient to the bloated yellow face of Balboa.

The *Iowa Farquar* banked sharply on its course trajectory, and spun down toward the planet. Billy had long since turned on the artificial gravity, and the ship slipped down with ease and assurance.

Billy stared at the image of Balboa, marveling.

It was like a bald man, with a few stringers of hair combed over the empty areas with

care. Running from pole to pole, in broken lines, were heavily-forested and tilled sections. They were of various colors—brown, green, dark-red, yellow—as though whatever crops had been planted there, or whatever vegetation grew there, had been specially selected so that no two were the same. And in between the planted strips, the planet was flat, lustreless yellow, featureless, without body of water or mountain or even plain. Flat and solid deep-yellow, like a seamless basketball. Almost as though Balboa were some artificial satellite on which vegetation had been placed as an afterthought . . .

The ship veered off-orbit. Billy felt the *Iowa Farquar* skitter and drag back, fighting the new pull on its body. He cast a frightened glance at the dial banks, and saw that gravity had gripped the ship, that the automatic reverse tubes had cut in to buck it, and *were doing no good!*

The altimeter spun crazily, and the ship heeled as it was pulled down. Billy realized at once that whatever had happened to the space liner on which Roxella Farquar had been traveling, whatever had taken the thirty investigating ships, was now happening to him.

The bulk of Balboa swam up rapidly in the view-globe.

Billy kept careful watch on the telemetering devices and was relieved to see that whatever he was getting into would at least be on a world with Earth-normal gravity, atmosphere and safe spore content. He went back amidships and slipped into an armored suit, one of those used for high-target work with acetylene-tubes and hard radiation bricks. He undogged one of the seam-locks on the suit, and swung away the right hand glove, leaving his right arm revealed from the wrist down.

Then he got out the .72 from the locker. Using the manipulative devices on the left hand steel glove of the armor-suit, he checked the safety, the breech, the gelatin charge chamber and the range mechanism.

He laid it aside, and took the .375 Magnum down from its clips in the locker. He loaded an extra palm-box. He slung the rifle over his shoulder, fastening it there with a hook from the suit.

He was stumping his way heavilyfootedly in the armor-suit, back up to the control room, when the tubes blew. He heard a warning sizzle and then a popping, which his implanted knowledge warned

him was the first stress-noise from arearships. Then there was a screech and a scream, and flying metal thundered through the ship, whizzing about like shrapnel, smashing the bulkheads, spanging off the deckplates, crushing the equipment with wild trajectories. He was caught on the head and back by two large pieces of tube-metal, and went down in a clanking heap.

It was probably all that saved his life.

Billy lay there shaking, listening to the unbelievable sounds of the tube parts spanging into the control room, the delicate tinkle of shattering machines and breaking tubes. He heard the majestic view-globe exploding, and bits of plasticene came ripping in from the other direction.

The roaring and shattering did not stop till every tube was gone, and the ship was ripped open from snout to tail.

He lay there in the armor-suit and stared out at the deepening blue of the Balboan sky.

The ship continued to fall. Whatever they were using on it was independent of the tubes and had put so much strain on the power-cylinders that they had exploded. Me-

chanical frustration and insanity.

But whatever it was, it was a foolproof method of making sure a ship never got away again. So this was what had happened to the thirty search-ships.

Billy Fuhr doubted very much that he would find many of the Earthmen still alive down there on Balboa.

He only hoped Roxella Farquar had been nowhere near the line of flight of the liner's tubes. All that womanflesh wasted, would be a great loss to humanity.

And himself.

The ship continued to fall.

The first robot got to the ship just as Billy stumbled free of the wreckage. The power that had blown the tubes had reversed as the ship came in, indicating that they did *not* want to kill him—and that the tube-explosion had perhaps been an accident. It had not reversed quickly enough, however, and the *Iowa Farquar* had come in pretty solidly. Solidly enough to throw Billy half across the ship, and leave the *Iowa Farquar* a tumbled heap of wreckage.

The ship came down in the middle of a planted strip of deep blue, and Billy tumbled

down the rest of the corridor inside the ship. He slammed against the bulkhead, and managed to trip the release on the port. The plug swung open, then gathered momentum and clanged against the outer hull of the ship.

Billy staggered to his feet, and climbed down the ladder—at a weird angle—jumping the last two feet to the blue soil. It *was* blue. Blue stalks of some wheat-like grain rose almost to his knees, but the soil itself was of a deeply blued hue.

He had only a moment to look at it, however, because the glint of metal in the sun came to him through the face-circle of the armor helmet. He turned halfway around, slowly, cautiously . . .

The robot stood almost seven feet high, with a head that was rounded and set upon a wide triangular torso. A sort of carburetor-looking affair separated the torso and the horizontal tube of its lower half. Two spindly, jointed legs came off the cannister of the lower torso, ending in gripper feet. The arms were similarly formed and jointed, and in his metallic fingers, the robot carried some sort of deadly-seeming rifle. But the thing which stopped Billy was not the single tubular reflection plate set

in the center of the huge head; it was the *wavery*.

That was the only way he could think of it. Like a huge gong, being hit again and again, over and over, at spaced intervals. Billy remembered once when he had picked up a slug from a looter in Slobtown, and had been operated upon, under ether. While he was under sedation, someone had spoken his name, and he had heard it as though it were echoing forever and ever, down and down a long, enormously long, high-vaulted corridor, over and over and over . . .

That was what the wavery was like. As though a beam transmitter were sending out circular signal waves every few seconds.

From the semi-circular antenna attached to the robot's audio cannisters, on either side of the head, the wavery seemed to spread outward like ripples in a pond.

It was subtly terrifying.

As though the robot were being operated by some unseen force—implacable, untouchable, impregnable, and ever watching—directing the machine to do its bidding.

The robot walked with a loose-jointed, loping movement; awkward but remark-

ably swift and sure-footed. Even as he stared in dumb belief at this coolly stalking metal man, the robot swung its weapon out on Billy. He felt the same ingrained pangs of instantaneous fear he got every time he was in a duel. The .375 Magnum came off his shoulder, and was leveled at the robot. "Stop!" he called.

The robot kept coming, implacably.

The first beam Billy got off missed the robot by a scant fraction of an inch, tearing over the thing's right shoulder, leaving a smear like oxidized metal. The metal man did not seem to notice.

The next burst caught it dead-center, and ripped away half its huge torso. It faltered, and stumbled, as though it had lost its equilibrium. But it kept coming.

The third beam took it high in the head, tore through, and sprayed shards of metal every which way.

The thing halted and fell over on its side, still clutching the rifle. The wavery died off softly, with a decreasing volume, till it was a fly's-wing whisper.

Then silence.

For a minute, until the throbbing started in Billy's head. He had started across the field, making each step a

cautious one, with the rifle swung down into fire position, and abruptly the throbbing started up from the soil and the stalks of plants, and the heavy cleated metal boots of the suit, and then his legs, and then his thighs, and then his stomach, and then his head was beating with the over-and-over beat of it.

The same beat as the wavery of the robot, but deeper, as though the very gut of the planet stormed up at him. Beat. Beat. Beat.

Billy felt it threading in and out of his brain. Then it burst with full fury, and his mind exploded into a billion little red wet squirming segments. He felt his legs go out from under him. The rifle dropped from his limp hands.

Pain flamed and drove at him furiously; he toppled as the metal man had toppled, and lay wriggling in a semi-conscious state. Then insanity blackness closed over him as he realized the ground had opened and he was dropping like a plummet weight.

Straight to the center of the planet.

There was a goddess standing over him when he staggered out of the kingdom of the blind. She was unbelievably sweet and beautiful. It was

fantastic that so much loveliness could emerge from so much pain and agony. Billy tried to force his eyes to unfog. The film passed from them and he saw her clearly. Her hair was long and golden, hanging to her shoulders with that smooth silken quality that makes a man feel it was grown just to be touched. Her body was straight and firm, and her eyes were a sharp snapping brown that indicated a strong will and sharp intellect.

There were lines of great pain and suffering among the even contours of her features. Whatever had happened to her here on Balboa, had changed her not much outside—but greatly inside. Still, she was the same woman from the photoblok in the pixie-man's tower.

"Roxella F-Farquar?" he stammered.

An expression of complete disbelief, complete bewilderment, passed over her full lips, her sensitive eyes. "You know me. The Heart called me from my field, told me you were thinking of me. Told me to be here when you awakened. Is that true?"

Billy shook his head to clear the fog, and slapped a hand to his hip. No gun. "Is . . . *what* true?"

Her mouth drew down into a half-pout. "Is it true you were thinking of me?"

He nodded his head slowly. It hurt. "Could be. Yeah, I probably was, I guess. But how did *you* know?"

"I just *told* you. The Heart called me and *said* you were thinking of me. It must have extracted the thought from you; it's strange, but I know the Heart can read our minds, yet it seldom bothers. I wonder why that is? Do you know?"

Billy slid his feet off the hard slab on which he had been lying. The feet did not touch the floor, and his hands felt greasy. He looked down and saw they were covered with oil; the slab was covered with oil.

She caught his glance, said, "Oh, this was the only place the Heart had to put you, I guess. It's a robot repair shelf. Don't mind the grease, it'll work off in the sunshine."

Billy stood down, and fell back against the table, clutching his head. He felt as though his brains were subtly scrambled. "Lady, I haven't got the damndest idea what in blazes you're talking about. Where *am* I?"

"Balboa," she replied coolly, leaning against an intricate piece of blocky machinery.

"I *know* that," he cried, "I landed here! But where on Balboa?"

Her eyes opened wider. "You don't know, do you? You actually don't know. What are you doing here?"

He looked toward the unseen sky, and said very carefully, "Your father sent me, Miss Farquar. After dragging me from my home, calling me a guttercrawl . . ."

She inserted quickly, with a pooh-poohing attitude, "Oh, don't mind old B.F. He has a pretty small-minded view of Slobtowners. I can see how he developed it, of course, but then—"

"As I was *saying*," Billy cut in angrily, "after calling me a guttercrawl, sizzling me with blue lightning and threatening me with ashes if I didn't come after you, I was joyful to trot out here. Now I'm here, and my ship gets dragged down, smashed up, a clanking tin can with eyeballs comes after me, and when I burn it good, I'm mind-blasted.

"Now: where in the bloody hell am I?"

"Okay, okay, take it easy. I'll tell you. Balboa was once a research planet for some race or other. Somewhere along the line the race got itself killed off, but not before it had

started to build this gigantic robot brain in the center of the planet, to fight their wars and run their factories, and so on. That was a long, long time ago."

"How long?"

"From what I can gather talking to the Heart, perhaps thirty or forty million years ago. But at any rate, the race was killed off, and the brain was left unfinished. However, it had a self-repairing ability—utilizing those servo-robots you met on the surface—and it went ahead building itself. But it didn't work along the same lines as the race that had begun its construction, and in about a thousand years it had built itself so that it filled the entire center of the planet. It now fills this planet to almost five miles below the surface."

"You mean this entire world—Balboa—is a big computer, with a soil-skin around it, and seven-foot robots running around on top to take care of it?"

She nodded. "That's right. For thirty, forty-some thousand years, the thing just lay here—not knowing what to do with itself. Then, along came an Earth-ship a few hundred years ago, and landed here. From the minds of the Earthmen, the brains found out

about 'conquest' and 'desires' and 'wealth' and everything else we are heir to. So it realized it had a great potential, and it did not kill the Earthmen—it studied them—reading their minds from time to time, to gather more emotional information, to use on the day the brain invades the galaxy."

Billy snuffed, "Impossible! Fantastic! You're out of your mind, that crash must have shaken loose *your* bolts."

Roxella Farquar drew herself up. A haughty expression filtered across her face. "Listen, Mister, if the Heart had not ordered me here, I would not *be* here, so don't insult me."

"What's the Heart?" Billy asked, mollified slightly.

"The brain."

"So if it's a brain, why does it call itself the Heart?"

She was getting angrier by the second. "How the hell do *I* know? That's what it calls itself, that's what *I* call it, and that's what *everybody* left here calls it, mostly because if we don't, it'll burn us to death. Clear?"

Billy said, "Clear," with obvious unhappiness, and asked her to tell him the rest, if there *was* any more.

"Well," she continued, "the Heart wants all the data it can

glean from human minds, and it's been capturing as many Earth ships as come this way, which isn't many. We're pretty far off you know. Only a contra-terrene cloud that passed our path could have shaken us from the liner's regular route and brought us near enough for the brain's draw-power to pull us in.

"But the Heart doesn't just want anybody. It wants only Earthmen with clever minds, because those are the ones from which it can get the clearest, truest emotions, and insights on humanity. That will all come in handy when it strikes . . . maybe in another three thousand years."

"It sure takes its time, doesn't it?" Billy said snidely.

"Takes its time," she replied, "but it can't fail."

"So how does it tell who are the smart ones?"

"You'll find out," she smiled.

"What does it do with the dumb ones?"

"You'll find *that* out, too."

"You really like playing games, don't you?" Billy asked, trying to conceal his interest in the girl.

"Listen, Mister . . ."

"The name is Fuhr. William Bonney Fuhr. From Slobtown."

Her tone changed, and she

forgot to complete her previous sentence. "You don't talk like a Slobtownner."

"Oh? How is that? How are we *supposed* to sound?"

She stumbled and fumbled and blushed, and had difficulty getting out her thoughts. Billy cut her off.

"Books and reading, Miss Farquar. That's all; just a few of the things you take for granted, can clear away a great many of the rough edges we pick up fighting for bread and bed in Slobtown. A little bit of self-education."

She lowered her eyes, softly, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean that."

"Forget it. You were saying . . ."

She looked up. "Yes, well, the reason I may seem so flip-pant is that there just isn't any hope. The Heart rules the planet, knows everything that happens, and has its robot arms to take care of any trouble. And even if there *was* some way to escape the Heart, the suck-power is on, and nothing could get off-planet. So we're doomed to spend the rest of our days here, letting the Heart pluck out what it wants to know, whenever it wants to call us for hearing."

"How often is that?" Billy asked.

"Oh, I've been down here

ten or twelve times, I suppose."

"Well . . . what do you plan to do, spend the rest of your life here? And, say, if the Heart rules the planet, what's it got grain and such out there for? It doesn't need food does it?"

She looked thoughtful, then answered, "The second question first. It's got grain and such growing there because it's *always* had it there, and it sees no reason why it *shouldn't* grow there. The robots tend most of it, but to keep us humans busy, the Heart makes us cultivate and tend strips. Keeps us out of mischief . . . not that we could get into any. We're even put in separate force-cells each night. And the other question. I intend to do nothing."

Billy shook his head in wonder. "That's pretty damned fatalistic, isn't it?"

She spread her hands in hopelessness. "What is there to do? You have any ideas?"

Billy had quite a few—not all of which were concerned with getting off Balboa—but the most important question was, "Are there any ships here that work?"

She nodded. "Several. In the graveyard. Where we buried the ones the Heart could not

use. The Heart used them to understand inverspace mechanisms, then just let them lay. Whether they'll work or not is another problem."

"Good," Billy said, "then here's what we'll do. I'll—"

The mental voice cut him off sharply.

"That will be all, Billy Fuhr. I want you now."

Billy's face drew up in shock. The voice was cold, hard, inflexible as steel, and he knew without a doubt where it had its source. The Heart had called.

"It spoke to you, didn't it?" Roxella said, her brow furrowing, and a clasped fear in her eyes.

"Did you hear it, too?"

She shook her head fearfully. "No, but I can tell the expression by now. We all look the same. It's peculiar. You'd better go."

"Where?"

"Follow the pattern of orange lights."

A bright intricacy of orange, phosphorescent and shimmering, had appeared on the wall near the door. "What is this?" Billy wanted to know.

She shook her head again, this time in resignation. "It's your test. If you're smart enough, you live out your days on Balboa . . ."

The mental voice cut through again: "Now, Fuhr!"

Billy started toward the door, and it opened for him. He heard Roxella Farquar finish the sentence, just before the door slid shut behind him: "—if you're not, you'll die in the center of this planet."

He was alone, and he followed the orange lights on the walls. Down, down, down, into the gut of the planet. A world that was a mere shell over a gigantic thinking machine.

A machine he had to beat at its own tests.

"I'm waiting, Fuhr," the Heart spoke in his brain.

"You're quite the little steel Napoleon, aren't you?" Billy gibed aloud, but a stinger of pain up his right side silenced him.

The Heart had everything its way.

Was he smart enough? He didn't know.

The Heart was gigantic. More than that. Gigantic was a word to be used on commonplace things like mountains and palaces and seven-foot robots. This was something else. As far above him as he could see, the banks of glittering, dial-encrusted computing structures stretched. Not for feet, but for miles. Straight

up into the inner section of the planet. And probably as far beneath him as above. The room was merely a hollow, circular area in the middle of the brain.

A dull pulsing throb went through the room steadily. It was the same beat as the robots aboveground had had. Beat, beat, beat as the signals went out like ripples in a pool of water. Billy's mind was a welter of mixed thoughts; he had been thinking about something before he came down here—something about a weapon, but that thought was gone. Gone.

What Billy did not know was that the psychmen in Farquar's labs had done an excellent job of implanting. They had keyed in his thoughts so that whenever he thought of the gun hidden in his arm, the thoughts would not clear. They would be deflected. Every time, that is, but the times of extreme pressure, extreme danger, when it was a total necessity; *then* he could think of it, then he could use it.

Billy walked forward, and the sound of his boots on the steel floorplates rang back with hollow authority. In every corner of the cornerless room lights flickered and

danced and marched in steady progressions across the computer faces. Green snakelike lines wriggled over the calibrated screen of an oscillograph, and the bleet-bleet-bleet-bleet of a waveform signal mechanism kept steady accompaniment to the almost soundless beating of the wavery.

"You are easily impressed," the Heart said.

"You're nuts!" Billy replied. If he was going to be struck dead, at least he would die having said what he wanted to say.

Strangely, the Heart's tones changed. Not in pitch, for it was a completely mechanical voice, but somehow in the spacing and use of the words, it was apparent the machine had been insulted.

"No need to get sarcastic," it said.

And somehow, that sentence made Billy Fuhr's mind change about this great, hulking machine in the gut of a world. There was something definitely childlike about it—in the way it took offense—and now that he thought of it, in the way it domineered—the same way a child would domineer its parents if it should suddenly become twenty feet tall. Was it possible that even forty million years was not

enough to bring a computer this size out of the adolescent stage?

"I'm not reading your thoughts, you know," the Heart said. And now Billy no longer read the tones of a cruel, insensitive Napoleon into its words; now he heard the slightly pleading, trying-to-make-an-impression, ready-to-destroy-if-angered-or-frustrated voice of a child.

"Thank you," Billy answered.

"I have a test for you, you know," the Heart said, somewhat anxiously, and (Billy thought) somewhat happily.

"Fine. Glad to try it," Billy said.

"Good. Good. I'm sure we'll get along. You're a very pleasant one. Most of them were unpleasant, or thought I was stupid. A few didn't, like that girl you were thinking about. She's been the nicest so far. She isn't made to work as hard as the others."

"Do you think you can pass the test? I'd hate to have to burn you down."

Billy swallowed with difficulty. "I sure hope I can. You're pretty big, aren't you?"

"I sure am. Forty-eight thousand miles of steel plate. Over three billion miles of coil

and wire. I'm big all right. You noticed that."

Billy warmed talking to the Heart. "I guess you're the biggest robot brain I've ever seen."

"I guess so," said the Heart laconically, as though being big wasn't everything. "But it gets lonesome. The robots aboveground aren't much to talk to, you know." Then, as though he hated to cut off the pleasant conversation, the Heart changed the subject. "Well, we'd better get to the test."

"You'll have three chances to solve this one."

A tiny plug-port in one bank opened, and a metallic arm—ball-jointed in a dozen places—slid out. There were five metal fingers at the end of the hand, and as Billy watched, the hand made a fist, with the forefinger extended.

"Now," said the Heart, "I am going to say and do something, and if you can repeat it exactly, you can live. If you don't repeat it exactly, again *exactly*, then you will die, I'm afraid."

"That's the test?"

"That's right. Ready?" Billy nodded.

The Heart cleared its banks...

Chatter, chatter, chatter, clickclickclickclickclick!

Then, as the hand moved, the voice said: "A human's face is round (the forefinger traced a circle counter-clockwise in the air), has two eyes (the hand jabbed twice, where eyes would be in the circle), a nose (it jabbed once), and a mouth (the forefinger drew a curving, smiling line under the nose-jab in the invisible circle). Now, repeat it."

Billy thought for a moment. "Is that *all*?"

The Heart grew steely once more. "Repeat it *exactly*."

Billy had remembered the direction each time, and he began, "A human's face is round, has two eyes, a nose, and a mouth," drawing the face precisely as the robot had done.

"Okay?" Billy asked, knowing he had done it right.

"No," the Heart answered. "That is the first time. I will repeat."

Billy felt his stomach heave. What had he done wrong? Was it a trick of some sort? It seemed all too simple, too childish. Did it have the inevitable subtle trickery of the childlike game inherent in it?

He watched as the Heart traced the pattern again, said the phrase again.

Chatter, chatter, chatter, clickclickclickclickclick!

Banks cleared, the Heart

repeated the words and maneuvers exactly as before, and this time Billy saw it *was* the same as before . . . no difference. So the inaccuracy was elsewhere. Not in the hand-movement.

He recalled the words, and tried a second time: "A human's face is round, has two eyes, a nose, and a mouth." His forefinger drew the face again perfectly."

"Wrong," said the Heart. This is the third and last time. If you don't repeat it *exactly*, I'll have to turn the batteries on you. I'm sorry. So few ever succeed at my tests. Do you think they're too hard?"

Billy did not answer.

The Heart cleared its banks with a

Chatter, chatter, chatter, clickclickclickclickclick!

And then it repeated the human's face is round, has two eyes, a nose, and a mouth once more.

Billy thought, and thought, and his mind whirled. Whatever it was, it would not be obvious. It would be something he would not notice, something ordinary that would not attract his attention. Something like . . .

"Of course!" he cried.

Now what was the human equivalent of clearing banks

with a *chatter, chatter, chatter, clickclickclickclickclick-click!*

Billy cleared his *throat* loudly, and repeated the motion words as he had both other times.

"That's *right!*" the Heart exulted. "Oh, good, good, now you can live, and we'll have many chats together, and I won't read your mind unless I'm trying to find something out. Now you can go above-ground, and one of my robots will find you a field to till.

"Good-bye . . ."

"So long," said Billy, walking back along the trail of orange phosphorescence, and not feeling frightened or angry toward the Heart at all. After all it was only a big, overgrown metal-headed kid.

He went back up the ramps for what seemed hours, and a robot met him—rifle ready—and escorted him to another kind of droptube that dragged him upward from the center of Balboa. In a half hour, the light of the three suns warmed him, and the wildly rioting colors of Balboa's surface assaulted his eyes.

He saw Roxella Farquar heading out toward her field, and he called to her. As her robot walked her away, she turned and saw him, and his heart bubbled inside him as

she gave a little smile, and a wave of her hand.

He went to his field, whistling.

Mentally getting ready for the breakaway from Balboa.

Five months is a long, long time, when you spend your days working under the glare of three suns, and your nights in a wall-less cell of energy, separating you from the ten other humans who share your fate. But there are things that make the days less long:

The time you find a rusty file, dropped by a robot mechanic.

The day they take away your arm-chains.

The day you try to slug a robot who works you too fast.

The day they attach the wrist-chains again.

The day you decide to break and free yourself.

Billy Fuhr had worked under pressure for five months. Slowly it had built; at first he hadn't minded too much. It was odd. It wasn't the kind of life he wanted, but he didn't really feel like losing his life making a break. But the tension and the agony built like a wall, stone-by-stone.

Then one day, the blocks broke down in his mind, the implanted disregard of the

weapon in his arm sifted away, and he recalled he had a weapon.

He was in the field. His clothes were rags by now, and the only thing bright and shiny were the manacles and the length of rigid chain between his hands.

Off beyond him he could see one of the humans—a man named Fairsmith who had been there for twenty years—seeding his strip of land with a soil-box. He watched the man for a minute, shaking the box to allow the seeds to spill from the grating at the bottom. He watched the man's robot, standing nearby, rifle at the ready; then he stared at his own.

"Work," said the robot stolidly. It was one of the ten or twelve words Billy had been able to get from the machine. Unlike the Heart, who had many long talks with him, this reflection-faced imbecile only urged him to work more.

Was this the kind of life he wanted?

He had to get away now!

The barriers fell . . .

. . . he remembered the operation, the false skin, the gun.

The file had been buried weeks before in the field. He had carefully avoided thinking about it when he was in

the presence of the Heart, down in the center of the planet. Now he carried his hoe a few feet, and began digging steadily, pretending to loosen the soil. In a few moments he had turned up the rusty file, and he turned away from the robot, not bothering with the manacles and chain.

It was that pseudo-flesh he wanted to file away.

He began rasping the dirty, soil-clogged file across his forearm. In a few moments the flesh began to rasp away. The robot grew suspicious.

"Work! Work!" it said loudly, and began to walk forward, its rifle ready to swing down into firing position. The *wavery* got stronger. It was, perhaps, communicating with the Heart. Billy knew this was the time; now or never! He had to hurry. He couldn't move fast enough.

Like ripples in a pool the *wavery* went out stronger and stronger.

Billy filed and scraped, and a second later the flesh peeled back—and there it was.

The deadly thousand-shot stinger.

He ripped the gun from his arm, and in the same motion shoved the flap of pseudo-skin back. It sucked into place without a seam, and he turned

on the robot as it came up behind him.

"Five months," Billy spat, and shot the robot in the big, glowing reflection tube. The robot keeled over, and then Billy aimed at a separating link of the chains. It went with a sizzle and a flow of slagged metal, and his hands were free.

Fairsmith's robot gave him as little trouble.

Then there were two of them.

In a few minutes all ten of the humans were free, and racing for the graveyard of downed ships. But Billy's mind rejected the idea that the Heart did not know what was going on. When each robot was receiving its *wavery* signals from that central source, it was impossible to suspect that the giant robot brain did not know what had happened.

He clung to Roxella Farquar's hand, and dragged her across the fields to the ships. One of them was still quite intact, and they climbed inside, dogging the ports, and running up the ramps to the control room.

In his head, Billy felt the *wavery* getting stronger on the planet.

Luck remained with them—or perhaps it was *not* luck—

for the ship throbbed as the drive rods were cut in, and a moment later the big ship roared away from Balboa.

They were far outside the orbit of Balboa, careening between the two largest suns with reflection-shields at full-strength, when the call came into Billy's mind.

"Good-bye. There will be others. And I really had no further need of any of you. The day will come soon."

Each of them turned. "Did you hear it?" Roxella asked nervously.

Billy nodded, and the others sagged. Were they going to be killed in space? But nothing happened. The *wavery* died out, and they were alone for the first time in a long while.

Billy slumped into a dusty saddle-seat. "It *wanted* us to escape. That's why this ship works; that's why my blasting the robots was so simple. That's why the suck-power was turned off.

"The Heart isn't really such a bad sort. Even a vengeful kid doesn't want its playthings unhappy. As long as it'll take the Heart maybe another billion years to start the invasion of the galaxy, it saw no reason why we couldn't live out our lives in peace and happiness.

"I feel sort of sorry for it."

They agreed in their own ways, and each went to find what he sought on the ship. Rest, or food-paks, or a radio, or a view of the stars before they snapped into inverspace.

Roxella stayed with Billy in the control room.

"What are you going to do when we get back?" she said, and there was more than interest in her voice. Billy felt a strong attachment for this girl, who was not cut from the same mold as her father.

"Your dad promised me a life of wealth and ease in Moneyville. Should I accept?"

She shrugged her shoulders with an eloquent show of unconcern. "It's up to you. Did you see many of the men in Moneyville?"

"No, I was brought in a sealed trundler. The only one I was was your father."

She pursed her lips. "Dad's an exception," she said, with a tinge of bitterness. "He got wizened with his own nastiness. But the rest . . .

"The rest, they're all fat and sluggish. Moneyville does that to you. When you've got everything you want, when there's nothing to work for, you finally get soft.

"Power corrupts," she began.

"And absolute power corrupts absolutely," he finished. "I see what you mean."

"So you can do what you want. It's a free world."

Billy thought of the life behind him in Slobtown. Of grubbing and filth and killing and the cheap, low, low, low feel of it all. "Is it a free world?"

She looked at him strangely, and then lowered her eyes. "I see what you mean."

"But," he concluded sadly, then spread his hands, "I'm still boxed in. If I take what he offers, I'll—I'll never be able to see you. I'm afraid your father doesn't take well to a gunman from Slobtown. And if I refuse, it's either a beam in my head, or back to Slobtown."

They stared at each other silently for a long moment, a silence that was an eternity hanging between them black and ever-long as Forever.

The ship snapped into inverspace. The trip to Earth was well on its way.

Behind them, on a planet that was not a planet, but merely a husk housing a forty-billion-year-old brain of fantastic power, the winds played silently where they had tread. Silently forever.

The room was as loud and glaring as before, and this

time the pixie-man was not in his high chair. He chuckled and capered and bumbled about the room, hugging and kissing his daughter, pumping Billy's arm, calling him a saviour and a great man and the recipient of all the wonders that could be bestowed by the Farquar domain.

Then they sat down and Billy told him about the Heart. "Hmmm," Farquar mused. "That brain might be the source of a great deal of power."

Billy saw a strange parallel between the steel Napoleon back there on Balboa, and this power-mad little man before him, and he knew now was the time to pull his card.

"The Heart is going to be left alone," he said succinctly.

Farquar looked up, startled. Then his anger rose. "Don't talk to *me* that way. I'm the one man you *can't* . . ."

"I *can* and I *will*," Billy said, and as Farquar's hand moved to make the beam-motion, the thousand-shot stinger came out, pointed at his head.

"Now read me, and read me straight, Farquar," Billy said. "That Heart can be the source of a great deal of good. It's not a bad sort, really, just like a kid with no proper training. It gets off in a wrong direc-

tion; like me. But the Heart is going to have a chance. There's going to be a 'Keep Off' sign posted on it, and maybe in a billion years when it's ready to come off-planet and see what the rest of the Universe is like, we'll be ready to help it, not fight it.

"Furthermore," Billy continued, before Farquar could register a pompous objection, "I am not settling here in Moneyville. I'm marrying Roxella, and we're going to live in Slobtown . . ."

"The *hell* you are!" Farquar screamed, half-rising. Roxella pushed him gently into his seat once more, and the old man looked up at her in wonder and sorrow. "Not—you—too."

She nodded, said, "Listen to Billy."

"I'm marrying Roxella," Billy went on, "and we're going to put your wealth to good use. We're going to clear up Slobtown, and get the people out there educated. Then we're going to lower the force-barrier, and maybe when the Heart comes to us, we'll be well enough adjusted to help it find a path of mutual reward. Now do you understand?"

"I'll kill you," Farquar said.

"Perhaps so," Roxella cut

in, "but if you do, Father, I'll leave you again, just as I did when I was captured on that liner. But this time I'll get away, and if they try to bring me back, I'll kill myself."

The old man looked betrayed.

Roxella tapped him lightly on the nose and said, "Oh, Father, stop being such a rotter yourself. You'll see, things will work out just fine. And you won't have to spend all your time with those fat miserable slugs from the other side of Moneyville. You'll love Billy for a son-in-law."

The girl kissed him lightly on his head, and Billy stood

up. He tossed the gun to the pixie-man. "Here. We understand each other now, I think."

They started to walk to the droptube.

"Where are you going?"

"To look for a place to live. In Slobtown," Roxella said.

They disappeared down the shaft, and the pixie-man remained sitting in his crazily geometric chair.

"You don't know who to trust these days," he moaned. "The world has gone mad, mad, mad!"

But he was wrong.

The world was just beginning to regain its sanity.

THE END



"Wow! These Earth people are way ahead of us."

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THE BABBIT FROM BZLFSK

By HENRY SLESAR

We deliberately planted a "boner" in this story. It has nothing to do with the science-fiction aspects of the yarn, but is a definite misstatement of established terrestrial fact that we think many readers will spot—even if they aren't sport fans. And we expect plenty of letters pointing it out. So, based on the earliest postmark, we are going to present an original Valigursky cover painting to the first reader whose letter correctly identifies the error. The next ten will receive Finlay and Novick interior illustrations. So if you'd like to own an original that might someday be really valuable, read this story very carefully and get your letter in the mail.

THE Brooklyn left fielder had just chipped the scoreboard with a drive that sent the runner on first trotting easily into third. In the grandstand, the shirtsleeved crowd roared, shouted, and cavorted their approval, and their midsummer madness made the quiet little man in the pale gray suit incongruous by his serenity.

"Say, buddy." A pleasant-faced, sandy-haired young man nudged him politely. "What's the matter? Haven't you got any *feelings*?"

The little man turned sad, colorless eyes on the speaker. His features were soft and blurred, like a newborn kitten.

"I'm sorry," he answered gently. "You see, I don't believe it would be fair to be partisan in your sports."

The young man blinked at him, and then turned his eyes back to the field. The next batter popped out, but the on-deck hitter stepped into the first pitch and slammed it through the hole between the pitcher and shortstop. It was the signal for further pandemonium in the stands, and the little man emerged with his hat thoroughly pummeled out of shape. He sighed with gratitude when the next two men at the plate dribbled the white sphere into the waiting arms of the second baseman.

In the top of the eighth inning, Brooklyn was leading by three runs, and the opposing team had two outs against them. The young man said happily:

"Pitcher comin' up. Might as well close the inning."



The possibilities of Mr. Tim's science were endless.

"Why?" the little man said curiously. "His turn isn't concluded yet, is it?"

"No. But this guy Shultz hasn't hit all year. You'd think they'd pinch-hit for him, the jerks."

"Not one hit?" The little man looked puzzled. "It would seem to me that the law of averages—"

"Law of averages? Buddy, this guy couldn't hit a wall with a truck. He's been up forty-two times, struck out twenty-five, and rolled out the rest. What do you say to that?"

"Oh, dear," was what the little man said. He reached into the small suitcase on his lap and withdrew a rectangular object about the size and shape of a cigarette case. He made some adjustments on the tiny protruding knobs on the side, and peered closely at the miniscule windows cut in the face of the object. Then he looked up with a wan smile.

"How nice," he said. "The gentleman will get his first hit now. By my calculations, it should be a forceful blow."

The young man opened his mouth and looked towards the field. The man at the plate had just swung and missed the first pitch by a good three feet.

"Har, har," he said.

The next pitch sailed by him for another strike.

"How about it, pal?"

"There's still time," the little man said placidly.

There was, indeed, time. The Brooklyn pitcher tossed a floater up the alley, and the batter shut his eyes and swung mightily. There was a crack; the bat splintered; the crowd held its breath. For a moment, the ball was lost in the right field sunshine. Then the umpire was waving Shultz around the basepaths.

"A home run!" the young man said, popeyed. "Hey—who the hell are you?"

"Thims," the little man said, pocketing the shiny device and tipping his hat. "Mr. Thims is the name."

After the game, the young man collared Mr. Thims and guided him to a crowded emporium known as the Left Field Bar & Grill. He pushed him into a booth and placed a beer in front of him. Then he asked:

"Could I see that gadget of yours?"

"Certainly," answered Mr. Thims, and displayed it. "But I'm afraid I can't let you handle it. You're an Unauthorized Operator. It takes training to employ a Pocketacomp."

"A whosit?"

"Pocketacomp. It's a sub-sub-subminiaturized computer. A great deal more efficient than the kind you have on Earth. You see, on Bzlfsk, we employ a miniaturization technique that would be impossible for you. We miniaturize the people who *build* the machine first." He smiled contentedly.

"And where is this Bzlfsk?"

"Out there," the little man said, gesturing vaguely.

"I thought so," the young man grinned. "You're not the first man from Mars I've run into. Brooklyn's crawlin' with them. Now come on, chum. What's your angle?"

"You mean, what brings me to Earth?"

"If that's how you want to put it."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Look, friend. My name's Joe Gibson. I work five days a week and I sleep most of Saturday. On Sunday, I go to ball games if my wife, Charlotte, lets me. I'm just an ordinary Joe, understand? If you're looking for some patsy to con, skip it. Now let's hear the real story. What's your name?"

"Thims," the little man said. "And I am from Bzlfsk, truly I am. Not Mars. Bzlfsk. And—I'm rather ordinary myself."

"Ordinary? Not with *that* gadget in your pocket!"

"But everyone on Bzlfsk has a Pocketacomp. How else can you make decisions?"

"I dunno, buddy." Joe Gibson shook his head. "You're pretty persistent. Okay then. Let's see you put that thing to work again."

"Certainly. What would you like to know?"

"Well . . ." Joe scratched his chin and looked towards the bar. A fight poster caught his eye. "Tell you what. There's a heavyweight elimination fight on Wednesday. See if your little gadget can pick the winner."

"That's simple. Just tell me what facts you can."

Joe Gibson talked for awhile, and then Mr. Thims manipulated the Pocketacomp.

"The man you call Rocky will win," he said finally. "The Pocketacomp imagines it will be by a right cross in the eighth round. It's *sure* about the eighth round, but it seems to hesitate about the right cross."

"Well, we'll have to wait and see. Say, listen, Mr. Thims. You got any dinner plans tonight?"

"Oh, yes. I'm having dinner at your house."

"What!"

"It's all right, isn't it?"

"Well, sure. I was just going to ask you." Joe furrowed his brow. "'Course, I don't know how Charlotte will take it—"

"Oh, she'll be disturbed," Mr. Thims promised. "She'll say some awful things on the telephone. Shocking! But she will manage all right."

"How the heck do you know?"

Mr. Thims dropped his eyes. "I hope you won't be offended. But you see, I *arranged* our little meeting at the ball park."

"You arranged it?"

"You might say the Pocket-acomp did."

"But why?"

"I prefer," the little man said, "to tell you that at dinner. Do you mind?"

"No," Joe Gibson said, looking at him curiously. "Not at all. . . ."

By the time they reached the Gibson's small house in a development on Long Island, Charlotte Gibson's ire had cooled as the temperature of her pot roast had increased. When she opened the door to admit her husband and the stranger, she was actually smiling, and smoothing out the pretty-pink apron tied around her ample waist.

"Well, it wasn't so bad after

all," she said, pecking Joe on the cheek. "Seems the butcher made a mistake and sent me a fifteen-pound roast instead of a five." Her voice dropped to a conspiratorial whisper. "And he didn't charge me," she said.

"Ah," Mr. Thims said, sweeping off his hat. "How do you do, Mrs. Gibson?"

"Hello. Dinner will be ready in fifteen minutes. Joe, why don't you get Mr. — your friend a drink?"

"Sure, honey." He grinned and removed two bottles of beer from the refrigerator. "We don't do much entertaining."

"Yes," Mr. Thims said.

There was some small talk around the dinner table, and then Mr. Thims cleared his throat pointedly.

"Mrs. Gibson," he said, "I was telling your husband that I had arranged our meeting at the ball park."

"That's nice," Charlotte said comfortably. "Don't put salt on the potatoes before you taste them. I hope you like onions. I think they add a little something, don't you?"

"Yes," Mr. Thims said. "But as I was saying, I made sure to be invited here tonight, because I most sincerely wished to speak to you both."

"How sweet," Charlotte said. "Did you notice the flowers, Joe? It was the strangest thing. The florist came by and left them here. I told him it was a mistake, but he said no. They *do* make the table prettier, don't they?"

"You see," Mr. Thim said, "I'm from the planet Bzlfsk. The nature of my visit to Earth is a sort of survey. I have been selected for this assignment, I hasten to say, not because of any special talent, but because of my very—ordinariness. If that's clear."

"Perfectly," Charlott smiled. "Oh, dear, I forgot the pickles. Joe is crazy about pickles. Are you, Mr. Thims?"

"What kind of survey?" Joe Gibson said.

"We on Bzlfsk are industrious, thriving, and advanced," the little man said. "This is not to say, however, that we are completely happy. There is a definite lack in our lives, a hollow we are seeking to fill. You might say that we are a world without religion."

"Religion?" Mrs. Gibson said, with some interest. "I'm *very* fascinated with religion. As a matter of fact, some of the girls and I have joined the Temple of the Golden Salamander here in town. You know, Joe. That *thrilling* man with the beard—"

"That quack," Joe said sourly.

"Quack? How can you *say* that? You *saw* what he did for Mrs. Gross's arthritis. Why, she couldn't move a *finger* until he put her through the rites of the Nineteen Rays of the Setting Sun—"

"At any rate," Mr. Thim continued, "we have recently been presented with some interesting teachings, offered to us by a devout Bzlfskian scientist, who has developed the power to transfer himself from universe to universe, from planet to planet, in the flash of an eyelid. He has offered us a set of laws which seem to me to be wise and good laws. But rather than accept his teachings blindly, the Council of our world decided to investigate. And that is why I am here."

"I don't get it," Joe said, chewing slowly.

"The teacher who offers us this code of conduct has told us that your world is a good example of its precepts in action. Therefore, the Council suggested that some ordinary citizen—myself, as you know—visit your planet and study it with my own eyes. So here I have come."

"To learn what?" Joe said.

"How a typical Earthman

lives," Mr. Thims said. "You are both quite typical, you know. The Pocketacomp told me so."

"We are?" Joe Gibson said, pleased.

Charlotte frowned. "I don't know if I *like* that."

Mr. Thims coughed delicately. "I realized what an inconvenience such a survey might be. You see, in order to do an adequate job, I must live closely with you for a while. But there can be compensations for you, of course."

Joe's eyes narrowed. "How do you mean?"

"I can be of much service to you. The Pocketacomp may be very useful in solving whatever problems you may have."

Joe and his wife exchanged serious looks. Then Joe said:

"The Bennets!"

"Pardon?"

"The Bennets," Charlotte said, with pursed lips. "They are our next-door neighbors."

"And this is a problem?"

"It sure is!" Joe Gibson said violently. "That damn Bill Bennet! He's trying to push us out of the neighborhood. Claims that eight yards of our side acreage belongs to *his* property. He's even threatening to sue us, that skunk!"

"And that Clare Bennet!" Charlotte said. "With her

fancy mink coat and that squashy little sports car of hers. You ought to see her, Mr. Thims. She looks like a trick elephant in the damn thing."

Mr. Thims looked bewildered. "I don't understand."

"Listen," Joe grated. "The day I can pin Bill Bennet's ears back is the day I die happy. Just because he's a damn vice-president in some lousy company, he thinks he owns the world. If you can help me teach that pompous jerk a lesson, Mr. Thims, that's all the payment I want!"

Mr. Thims sighed. "Whatever you say. Just tell me what you'd like me to do."

Joe's face suddenly brightened. "Hey, I know! Maybe that gadget of yours can figure out something about this property business. Could you do that?"

"Certainly. If you give me the necessary information."

"I'll get the deeds and stuff. You wait right here."

In a moment, Joe was back at the table with a formidable stack of official-looking papers. Mr. Thims spent only a few minutes scanning the documents and the explanatory maps, and began twirling the dials of his strange little

computer. When he looked up at his calculations, he said pleasantly:

"Well, Mr. Bennet appears to be in the right. Your acreage clearly extends eight yards into his property. I'd suggest you settle the matter without litigation."

"What? That's not true!"

"Oh, but it is. You can't win, Mr. Gibson."

"It *can't* be!" Joe wailed. "I can't let that guy get away with this. Isn't there *anything* we could do?"

"Nothing I can see. Unless, of course, you simply moved his house eight yards. That's about all."

Joe's eyes gleamed. "Why not?"

"Pardon?"

"Why not? You said you could do a lot of things, Mr. Thims. Can you do this?" Is it possible?"

"Well . . . it's very irregular."

"You said you'd help us," Charlotte pouted. "This is your chance."

"But won't Mr. Bennet be angry?"

"You bet he will!" Joe laughed. "Do you think you could move his house? Without him finding out?"

"I suppose so. I have a small Matter Transporter in my suitcase. But we'd have to

place it within his home for at least twenty-four hours."

"Don't worry about that part," Joe Gibson said. "We'll get it into his house, all right. We can do it Wednesday night."

"Wednesday night?"

"Sure. We're going over there for dinner Wednesday. Then we're gonna watch the fight on their TV set."

Mr. Thims gulped. "You mean you're having dinner *there*?"

"Why not?" Charlotte said, wide-eyed. "After all, they're our best friends!"

Mr. Thims was still bewildered by the relations between the Gibsons and the Bennets when Wednesday night rolled around. When he was introduced at dinner ("our first cousin from Milwaukee," Charlotte simpered) he looked curiously at Bill and Clare Bennet and found them something less than ogish. Bill was a big, plump man with a boyish smile and clumsy hands. Clare was an attractive, bosomy woman in her early thirties, with flaming red hair and an incendiary figure.

The dinner was cordial, and except for Charlotte's envious comments about the silverware, the conversation was

pleasant. Mr. Thims was confused by this air of amiability, and began to doubt whether he should really install the Matter Transporter into the Bennet household. He drew Joe Gibson aside after dinner and asked him.

"Of course!" Joe said. "We'll fix that guy!"

After the meal, they all settled around the television set, a monstrous blank eye set into an antique cabinet. There was still almost an hour to go before fight time. Bill and Joe spent it by comparing war stories, with Joe Gibson (Infantry) and Bill Bennet (Air Force) trying to decide who had killed the greatest number of Germans in World War II. Charlotte and Clare, obviously familiar with this argument, spent their time talking of the Temple of the Golden Salamander, and the perfectly thrilling man with the beard who ran it. At last, it was five minutes to the hour, and Joe changed the subject.

"Say, Bill," he said casually. "How about making this interesting?"

"You mean a bet?"

"Sure. I'll take Rocky Clements. I'll even name the round."

"You're kidding?"

"No, I'm not," Joe said, looking sideways at Mr.

Thims. "I'll even name the punch, if you want."

"Now I *know* you're kidding. Since when did you become a fight expert?"

"Put up or shut up," Joe said mildly. "I'll pick Rocky in the eighth round."

"You're on, buddy. How about twenty bucks?"

"—by a right cross."

"Fifty bucks!"

"It's a deal," Joe grinned.

They turned on the set, chatted through the beer commercial, and leaned back in the darkness. It was a slow-moving bout, with Rocky Clements poking feebly at his opponent with short left jabs. Six rounds went by without a solid punch from Joe's choice, and Bill Bennet was feeling pretty good. In the seventh round, a roundhouse swing caught Rocky on the tip of his flat nose, and he sat down, bleeding and looking surprised. Bill howled with glee, and Joe glared at Mr. Thims.

At the start of the eighth, things looked glum.

Then, thirty seconds before the bell, Rocky Clements threw a desperate right cross. It connected. His opponent stiffened, blinked twice, smiled, and struck canvas.

Joe giggled when he took Bill's money.

When they finally left at twelve, Joe could hardly wait to ask Mr. Thims about his progress with the Matter Transporter.

"I planted it," Mr. Thims sighed. "The house will start moving gradually, imperceptibly. It'll move eight yards in about forty-eight hours. They will never even notice it."

"Great!" Joe said enthusiastically. "Mr. Thims, you're a pal!"

The rest of the week was quite uneventful, but Sunday brought trouble.

Joe Gibson woke up cheerful and whistling, and gathered himself a handful of tools from the garage. Mr. Thims watched him from the front window of the house, and saw Joe busily repairing and painting the white picket fence that divided the property between his neighbor and himself. Then he realized what Joe was doing. He was expressing his defiance of Bennet's threatened property suit, by sprucing up the fence that Bill Bennet wanted to knock down.

Around noon, Joe's happy mood underwent a change. Joe's parents, a white-haired couple who didn't do so well with the English language, came over for Sunday dinner.

Joe was pointedly impolite, and they ate their fill and left. Then Joe went back to work again.

Around five o'clock, Bill Bennet returned from a golf game and paused by the fence. He watched Joe.

"Say, Joe, kinda wasting your time, aren't you?"

"Oh, I dunno."

"Well, you know what I told you. No use fixing that fence now; you'll just have to pull 'er up again."

"Maybe. And maybe not."

"Suit yourself," Bill said. "But you saw the deed, and the maps and stuff."

"You, er, wouldn't care to measure the distance again? Yourself, I mean."

"What for? We've measured it half a dozen times. Your fence is eight yards into my property, and that's all."

"I wouldn't bet on it."

Bill frowned. Then he stomped into the house and came out again with a folding ruler. He grunted something at Joe, and got down on his hands and knees to mark off the distance between Joe's fenceposts and his own house.

Joe leaned on the fence and grinned.

On his doorstep, Bill Bennet suddenly exploded into a string of well-constructed swear words.

"It can't be!" he cried. "You cheated me!"

"Who, me?" Joe said. "What in the world are you talking about?"

"I *know* you were eight yards over! I know it! We measured it over and over—"

"Guess you were wrong, over and over," Joe said smugly.

"You're a liar!" Bill raged, storming towards his neighbor. "I oughta poke you—"

"Go ahead, pal. Then *I'll* do the suing."

Bill shoved his chin up to Joe's nose. From the house, Mr. Thims saw Joe's hand ball into a fist and swing in an awkward, but effective, hay-maker. Bill went down like Rocky Clement's opponent a few nights before. But he was up on his feet in an instant, tearing into Joe Gibson with short, clumsy punches. Their shouts aroused the neighborhood, and it wasn't long before the local constable was equally aroused. He separated the combatants, earning a blow in the stomach for his peace-making. That decided him to drag both competitors in front of a judge.

Mr. Thims didn't know the outcome of the battle until Joe Gibson returned home two hours later, looking bruised but satisfied.

"What happened?" Charlotte screeched, viewing his soiled clothes and swelling right orb.

"Nothing," Joe said stoutly. "I told them the truth. He swung at me, and I swung back. Self-defense."

Mr. Thims cleared his throat. "Well, it's none of my affair, of course, but I was watching from the window, and it seems to me—"

"You poor dear," Charlotte said. "Come and lie down."

"I'll tell you one thing," Joe Gibson said, as his wife applied a poultice to the eye. "He'll think twice about swinging on *me* again. That's one sure bet."

The next day, things assumed their normal placidity in the Gibson home, particularly since Bill Bennet, bruises and all, had headed off on a business trip to Chicago.

It was at the close of dinner that night when Mr. Thims brought up the subject of his departure.

"So soon?" Charlotte said, with unconvincing concern.

"What for, Mr. Thims?" Joe asked. "Your survey all done?"

"As a matter of fact, no. There's one more point I want to be absolutely clear about before I leave. As soon as I

find that out, I'll be ready to say good-bye."

"What point is that?" Charlotte said.

"Er—just a point."

"Well," the woman sighed, "I've got to get going if I'm going to make my bridge club meeting. You won't mind doing the dishes, Joe?"

"Sure, honey," Joe said graciously. "Mr. Thims can lend me a hand."

"Delighted," Mr. Thims said.

When Charlotte left the house, Joe and Mr. Thims attacked the dishpile. They were halfway through when Joe said casually:

"Say, Mr. Thims—I wonder if you'd mind being left alone this evening?"

"Mind? Of course not."

"I just remembered something I have to do. Some business. Only take me a couple of hours."

"I won't mind at all."

"Thanks," Joe said, and trotted off to the bedroom. He was there for twenty minutes, splashing and singing in the shower. When he emerged, he was wearing his best suit, a fresh shirt, and he had shaved for the second time that day. Mr. Thims watched his preparations for a couple of hours of business, and began to wonder.

When Joe was ready to leave the house, Mr. Thims went into the guest room and opened his small suitcase. He extracted a green bottle, unscrewed the cap, and removed one of the round pills inside. He took it to the Gibson bathroom, still redolent of Joe's aftershave lotion, and swallowed it with the aid of a little water. Then he stared into the mirror. He kept looking at his reflection.

In fifteen seconds, his reflection began to fade. In another ten seconds, there wasn't any reflection.

Satisfied that the invisibility chemical had withstood the journey from Bzlfsk to Earth, Mr. Thims returned to the living room. He was just in time to see Joe Gibson close the front door behind him. He waited a moment, opened the door again, and followed him out.

He didn't have far to walk. Joe merely cut across the lawn and around to the back of the Bennet home. He rapped lightly on the door, one-two, one-two, and slicked back his hair as he waited for an answer. When the door opened, Clare Bennet's hand was on the knob. Mr. Thims moved swiftly, and was able to sidle in neatly after Joe.

"What was that?" Clare said.

Joe looked at her. "What was what?"

"I thought I heard another footstep."

"You're imagining things."

"Am I?" She put her hands beneath Joe Gibson's coat lapels, and slid them up and down. She was wearing a filmy houserobe that had worn even thinner by repeated washings. She didn't seem to be wearing anything else. Mr. Thims coughed, and turned his invisible eyes away.

"Did you hear that?" Clare said, stiffening.

"Hear what? Say, you're pretty jumpy tonight."

"Can you blame me?" the redhead pouted. "After that awful rumpus you had with Bill yesterday?"

"Never mind Bill. He's a thousand miles away. He won't be back until tomorrow. Meanwhile, you got Joe." He kissed her.

"I made some Martinis," she said.

"Good. Where are they?"

"Usual place. Right by the bed."

Mr. Thims clucked.

"I *swear* I heard something," Clare Bennet said.

At dinner the following night, Mr. Thims looked at the

Gibsons and cleared his throat.

"Well," he said. "Today's the day."

"What?" Charlotte said.

"I'm leaving," Mr. Thims answered. "It's really been very nice, but I believe I've learned all I can. Thank you both for everything."

"Think nothing of it," Joe said grandly.

"I hope you'll give a good report on us," Charlotte simpered. "Are you going to recommend the adoption of those laws you told us about?"

"I'm afraid not."

"What?"

"I'm afraid the precepts are a total failure."

Mr. and Mrs. Gibson both put their forks down.

"I hate to say it," Mr. Thims continued. "But from what I have seen, you people have managed to break each one of the laws, without a single exception."

"You're crazy," Joe said, staring at him. "You've only stayed with us a few days. What are these laws, anyway?"

"There are ten of them," Mr. Thims said sadly. "They say you should have one God; you have several—including a graven image. You never hesitate to take the name of God in vain. You ignore the Sabbath. You show disrespect to

your parents. You boast of killing. You covet your neighbor's property. You bring false charges against him. You steal. And you, Mr. Gibson, last night, you even—"

"Wait a minute!" Joe exploded. "Those are the Ten Commandments. What kind of a gag is this?"

"Gag? I don't understand you."

"What are you, some kind of preacher?"

"Certainly not. I'm merely a research worker, Mr. Gibson. And I'm afraid that I must go home to Bzlfsk, and report total failure. The teacher's principles are unworkable."

He put down his napkin and rose from the table, a sad little gray man.

Mr. Thims was packing his suitcase when he heard the commotion on the first floor. He came to the landing, in time to hear Bill Bennet's gleeful words.

"So you thought you fooled me, hah? Well, take a look at this, buddy. Take a *good* look!"

"It *can't* be!" Joe Gibson was bleating. "You measured it yourself!"

"Sure I did. But the original surveyor's report was wrong. You're not just eight yards on my property—you're

eighteen yards. So you can just move that fence, buster!"

"But it can't be true! Mr. Thims figured it out—"

"And that's not all, pal. Did you see the afternoon paper?"

"Why?"

"Take a look!" Bennet cackled. "They just disqualified Rocky Clement in that fight Friday. The commission says it was fixed. So you can just hand me back that fifty—"

Mr. Thims blinked. He blinked again. Then he hurried down the stairs.

"Please—may I see that paper?"

Bill Bennet stared at him, but handed it over. Mr. Thims shuffled to the sports section. He ignored the story about Rocky Clement, and looked for baseball news. He found what he was looking for, and whooped with delight.

"What is it?" Joe said.

"Remember that pitching gentleman? The one who hit the ball so hard?"

"You mean Shultz, last Sunday?"

"Yes! They've reviewed the newsreels of the game. It was a foul ball he hit—not a home run!"

"So what? What's the difference?"

"Don't you see? The Pocket-acomp was in error! In every

case. The Pocketacomp is out of order!"

"So what makes you so happy?" Joe said.

"That means it made a mistake when it selected you and your wife as *typical*. You're not typical at all!"

"Is that good?"

"Good? It's wonderful!"

*

Mary Wills was just putting on the breakfast coffee when the doorbell rang. Her husband looked at her, grinned, and kept on stuffing cereal into the mouth of their one-year-old son. Mary wiped her hands on her apron and went to the door.

"How do you do?" the little man said. "I'm Mr. Thims."

THE END



"Those new pills certainly got rid of your headaches, didn't they?"

MOMMA BLEW A FUSE

By DORIS GREENBERG



THE robot-mothers were lined up in orderly rows on their wooden cots, lying unmoving and unthinking through the long days and nights. The brilliant overhead lighting did not seem to affect their upturned eyes, all gazing unblinkingly and uniformly at the white ceiling. Institute

Many viewers-with-alarm—and also a lot of solid, even-keeled thinkers—feel we're putting too much stress on "science for personal comfort." A life of ease with robots, calculators, etc., doing all the work seems to have become synonymous with Utopia. This can become dangerous, they say, and who is this editor to disagree? Doris Greenberg, in this story, has projected the "Machines taking over" theme to its ultimate. Read it—then you'll probably leave a note of warning for your great grand-children.

nurses came and went constantly, adjusting the tubings and varicolored vials which led to each silent robot body, checking all rheostats and thermostats for body pulsation and temperature.

The sounds of the outer city, those few which penetrated the windowless con-

finer of the large robot-dormitory, did not disturb the quiet of the room or attract the attention of any of its static inmates.

Along the corridors the same scene was repeated in ten more robot-dormitories, all filled with motionless, human-appearing robot-mothers. Except for their death-silent passivity, they very much resembled many human women who may be seen daily at the supermarkets or the movies, wearing the latest fashions in maternity garments, and carrying their ever-increasing burdens stolidly, awaiting the natal day.

Hal Nomal maneuvered his aero-jet auto into a corner spot of the Institute's parking lot, turned off the motor, and pushed down the parking brakes. Alighting from the blue and chrome two-seater vehicle, he dashed to the other side. Before Cindy could turn her handle, he opened the door quickly, and in the best chauffeur tradition, gallantly helped her descend.

Giving Hal a tolerantly amused smile, his slim blonde attractive wife complained, "I wish you'd stop treating me as if I were made of fragile china, Hal. It's beginning to get on my nerves."

Hal grinned sheepishly. "See that long gray building right ahead, honey? Just let me get you through that front door, and I promise I'll stop acting like one of those old-time prospective fathers."

"Well, let's go," she laughed lightly. "What are we waiting for?" Hal took her arm and held it firmly, slowing her to a sedate pace as they walked down the path leading to the building.

When they reached the wide gray edifice Hal had pointed to from the parking lot, they mounted a short flight of steps and stopped to read the carved inscription over the door. "Institute of Synthetic Gestation." "Brrrrr," Cindy mock-shivered. "It looks cold and forbidding, doesn't it? So super-scientific! Does it seem believable to you that hundreds of people have gotten their beautiful little babies from this place?"

"Well, if they did, so can we." Hal reassured her. "The only thing wrong with this set-up is the expense, but we can manage that all right. Just keep thinking of all the trouble and pain they'll save you, and stop worrying about the appearance of the building."

As they entered the wide, well-heated lobby, a white-

capped nurse advanced with quick little steps to greet them. Warmly, she grasped Cindy's hand. "Another little mother! Fine, fine. May I have your name please? Do you have an appointment with Dr. Forbes?"

"Cindy—I mean, Cindy and Hal Nomal." Cindy smiled nervously. "We have a two o'clock appointment with the doctor."

"Fine, fine." She released Cindy's hand and consulted her wrist watch. "You're right on time, and we certainly appreciate it. Dr. Forbes has a very busy schedule, and he can't afford to waste one teeny moment of his time. Just follow me, and I'll take you right to his private office."

Mincing down the corridor to their left, she led them to a door at the very end, which was lettered:

DR. HIRMAN J. FORBES
President
Institute of Synthetic
Gestation

They entered a large beautifully furnished office, dominated by a huge desk, behind which was a fine leather chair, empty.

"Dr. Forbes must have been detained," the nurse informed

them. "Please wait right here, he'll be down within a few minutes." She waved them to a couple of chairs facing the desk, and with a bright smile, hurried back to her post in the lobby.

In the silence of the enormous room, Cindy's heart fluttered and pounded loudly in her ears. Hal settled himself comfortably in his chair, and seeming to ignore his wife's obvious agitation, whistled softly an old nursery tune. He suddenly recalled the words, and turning to his wife, sang, with a mischievous twinkle, "'Rockabye baby, on the tree-top, When the wind blows, the cradle will rock.' Terrible rhyming, isn't it? But it just seems appropriate to the occasion."

Cindy cast him a worried glance. "I wish you wouldn't keep reminding me, I'm getting the jitters again. Do you suppose it will turn out all right? Do you think anything could go wrong?"

"Not a thing, I'd stake my life on it. They've been using this new system for us "privileged rich folks" for over seven years, and so far they've batted .1000. Just keep thinking of all the advantages." He comically ogled her with a leer. "Such as keeping that

pretty figure of yours. I just can't picture you in one of those maternity smocks, looking like Omar the Tentmaker. Why, we'll still be able to go skiing at Lake Placid this Christmas, just as we've planned. Now, when Dr. Forbes gets here, I'll ask him to explain the whole deal again for your benefit. You'll see. They know just what they're doing here."

The door just then was flung open, and a distinguished-looking man, Dr. Forbes presumably, walked briskly in and seated himself behind the desk. He shuffled through a few of the papers on the desk, till he found the one he was looking for. Then, raising his gaze to the faces of his young visitors, he gave them the full force of his "personality" smile.

"Well, well. Young Mr. and Mrs. Nomal. We are charmed to welcome you to our Institute. He tossed an appreciative glance at Cindy's obvious attractiveness, and then addressed them both impartially again. "I believe you are acquainted with the procedures already, but if you have any further questions before we send Mrs. Nomal upstairs, please feel free to ask me anything you wish."

Hal fidgeted in his chair. "Dr. Forbes, I'd appreciate if you would give my wife a quick rundown of the procedures. I've explained it all to her after I spoke to you on the telephone last week, but she'd be a lot happier to hear it from you."

Dr. Forbes smiled paternally. "I'm sure I can manage the time to go over the details with you, my dear. Our system, using the robot-mothers, is extremely simple, yet I think it is one of the greatest boons to womankind ever developed. I certainly feel sad when I think of all the lovely young wives who do not have the means to avail themselves of our services. You realize that we can make the necessary transfer only in the early months of your, ah-h, delicate condition, shall we say? It's a simple operation, and you should be able to return home within three days, and continue all your customary pursuits, without a thought of harm to the baby. The embryo will be transferred to one of our robot-mothers, and she will simply take over your job for you, passing the time pleasantly in one of our lovely rooms upstairs, till the time arrives for 'delivery.'"

"But," Cindy murmured weakly. "But how do we know

that the baby is developing normally and how do we know it's getting all its proper nourishment and hormones and things?" Her pretty brow was wrinkled in puzzlement, as Dr. Forbes smiled condescendingly at her.

"My sweet child," he soothed. "That is the reason we are here in business. We have discovered just what substances and nourishments are necessary to the development of a growing embryo. As a matter of fact, we have delivered over eight thousand babies since the Institute was begun, and according to our records, which are open for public scrutiny, each and every child presented to his proud parents has been a well-formed, healthy and perfect baby. Eight thousand hits, and not one miss—just think of it! And I know you'll be thrilled to know that at the time we make the transfer, we can predetermine the sex of your future baby, so you'll know just what color to paint the nursery."

He cleared his throat hurriedly. "Please pardon me for being facetious. I feel quite elated today, and believe it or not, it concerns you."

At Hal and Cindy's puzzled looks, he continued. "This morning, we received our first

mentally-endowed robot. I am sure, when I tell you how you would benefit if we used her in your case, you wouldn't mind the slight extra fee. In due time, we expect to replace all our mindless mother-robots with this new type. Considering all the advantages that will accrue to our prospective parents, it certainly will be worth the added expense. To them, I mean," he added hastily.

"But, Doctor," Hal interjected, "just what good will it do Cindy and myself to have an intelligent robot bear our child? I don't see the connection."

Dr. Forbes explained. "In the past, right up to the present day, we've been able to produce babies who are healthy and wealthy (since our clients are all in the upper tax brackets). But now we propose to produce babies who are healthy, wealthy and *wise*! Yes indeed, I said *wise*. You must have heard something about pre-natal influences at one time or another. Unfortunately that is one thing we have not been able to provide, up until today. But with a mental robot we can pass on to the infant, by indoctrination via the robot-mother's intelligence and re-

flexes, the best and most carefully selected pre-natal influences anyone ever had.

"Such as?" Hal prompted.

"We will expose this robot-mother to the best color television programs we can find. Everything dealing with music, art, literature, and good citizenship. She will listen to speeches by our highest men in office; she will hear the greatest music in the world; she will see on the television screen the paintings of the world's greatest artists. Why, when your child is 'Born,' he, or she, will be the best culturally-indoctrinated infant in history. Naturally, your child will be bound to grow up to be a very fine artistic, educated individual."

Hal spoke excitedly. "You have convinced me. And I'm sure Cindy feels the same way, don't you, dear? Whatever the additional fee will be, I'm sure it's worth it." Cindy nodded hesitatingly in agreement.

"Fine, fine," Dr. Forbes beamed heartily, and pressed a buzzer on his desk. "Nurse Watkins will take you upstairs now Mrs. Nomal, and don't worry, it's really only minor surgery. No comparison to carrying and bearing a baby the old-fashioned way. None at all! And Mr. Nomal,

be sure to take a nice vacation with your wife while your baby is being readied for you."

Hal smiled broadly. "You have hit the nail on the head, Doctor. We're going to Lake Placid soon for our Christmas vacation."

"Wonderful," replied the doctor, "wish I could go too. But my job is here, no holidays for me. Not with all these babies to bring into the world. So have a wonderful vacation, and don't worry about a thing."

So Hal didn't worry. And Cindy didn't worry, not too much anyways. They had a grand time at Lake Placid, and when they returned to their home after Christmas, Cindy busied herself with supervising the decoration and furnishing of the nursery. To their great pleasure, at the time of the transfer, Cindy and Hal had been informed that Hal, Jr., would be presented to them at the beginning of June, and following Dr. Forbes' advice, Cindy had the nursery painted a beautiful shade of blue.

In June, a phone call from Dr. Forbes' office informed the elated Nomals that their baby had been delivered in perfect condition, and would

be ready for them to take home the following week. After several days of breathless anticipation, Cindy and Hal again presented themselves at the Institute of Synthetic Gestation, anxious to get their first look at the new son and heir.

They were welcomed into his private office by a strangely subdued and crestfallen Dr. Forbes. With a pained, apologetic expression on his countenance, he silently handed Hal a letter he was holding in his hand. Cindy gasped as she and her husband read the boldly printed words, written in pencil on a sheet of hospital stationery.

Dear Human Parents:

I hope this will not come as too much of a shock to you. You can have other children. I want this one for my own.

When you read this letter, I shall be miles away from this place with my little son. Yes, my son, not yours! He belongs to me. I shall keep him and care for

him, and you will never find us. With my human appearance and brains, nobody will ever guess what I really am.

Please thank Dr. Forbes for the great favor he has done for me. The television indoctrination I received in order to influence the baby prenatally also served a better purpose. It educated me to read and write, and how to make my way in your world. Most important, watching human families together on that television screen, I learned the true meaning of mother-love, and so I have decided to keep this baby for my own. Good-bye, and thanks again.

Crazily, idiotically, a tune kept repeating itself over and over in Hal's mind. At a time like this! But the melody and the words kept intruding into his consciousness.

Rockabye baby, on the tree-top.

THE END

Your caveman ancestors couldn't read. But you can and are you lucky! Because the great June issue of AMAZING STORIES—35¢—is now on the newsstands. The lead novel —"A Pattern For Monsters" may scare you but it could be more truth than fiction. DON'T MISS IT.

GET OUT OF MY WORLD

By DARIUS JOHN GRANGER

*Johnny Mayhem is one of the most exciting series characters we've ever had. He's a mortal, yet is able to change bodies the way other people change clothes. In this hair-raiser, he climbs into the most amazing "garment" he ever "wore," and hikes out into space to straighten out a situation nobody wants straightened. And so the universal slogan becomes,
"Let's Murder Mayhem."*

THE Galactic League Observer, a fat, red-faced and sweating extrovert named Hull Fordson, leaned forward with a grin splitting his harvest-moon face, and said, his voice rolling liquidly: "Well, now, I always wanted to meet Johnny Mayhem in the flesh."

Mayhem shook hands with him, grinning also. "I would not exactly say in the flesh, Observer."

"Well, not *your own* flesh. I know that. I know it. How's the body? Any complaints?"

Johnny Mayhem shook his head. "No complaints on this one, Observer. Take it from me, that's a relief. I've had some pretty weird ones to work with in my time."

Johnny Mayhem thumped a fist against the chest of the body he'd been inhabiting

about half an hour now. It was a big, strong body. Mayhem could sense the strength in it and wondered if he'd have need to call on that strength. All he knew was his bodiless sentience had been sent here to Partap's Planet because there was the kind of trouble here which the people at The Hub thought Johnny Mayhem could handle.

"Well, as a matter of fact," Hull Fordson observed, "there is something special about this body we'd had in cold storage for you."

"Uh-oh. Does it get fits?"

"Nothing like that. It's a hero, Mayhem."

"I beg your pardon?"

"A hero. It was the great hero of the Partapian people. You know, like George Washington to the old North Amer-



This could be the end of the assignment—and of Mayhem

icans or Frederick Barbarosa to the Germans or Lul Hikor to the Callistians. Mostly like Barbarosa, I guess. Yes, like Barbarosa."

Mayhem, who knew his history, remembered the Barbarosa legend. "You mean," he asked, "*exactly* like Barbarosa? You mean the Partapians think that, in their worst time of troubles, their Barbarosa is going to come back to them—from the dead?"

Hull Fordson, Galactic League Observer on Partap's Planet, nodded. "His name was Hartoor Vanire. He died four hundred years ago, Mayhem. He's like a god to them. You see, it was his leadership which saved the Partapians from conquest four hundred years ago. If you know your interstellar politics, ever since then the Partapians have been violent isolationists. According to legend, if ever an external threat which the Partapians can't handle confronts them, Hartoor Vanire will come back from the dead to pull them out of it again. He died, as you can see, in the prime of life. He was the greatest hero these people ever had. And, as you can also see, they'll recognize him at once."

There wasn't any doubt about that, Mayhem knew, for he'd seen his new body in the mirror in the rebirth room. Hartoor Vanire had been a veritable giant of a humanoid, six and a half feet tall and well over two hundred pounds, with an unruly thatch of dead-white hair and the physique of an Apollo. No, there would be no mistaking Hartoon Vanire."

"The value of Hartoor Vanire's body," Observer Fordson was saying, "is obvious. In the first place, they ought to listen to anything their national hero tells them. In the second, if they ever thought it was an outworlder visiting them, they'd kill you instantly. But they sure as the devil won't confuse the great hero of their race reborn with an outworlder."

Mayhem asked: "How come Vanire's body was preserved four hundred years?"

"Accident. Partap's Planet was once a pretty cold world, would you believe it? Vanire died in the final battle with the invaders four hundred years ago—and his body was trapped in ice. Thirty years ago, it was found by archaeologists working in secret here on Partap's Planet. It was delivered to my predecessor, the old Observer, before it could

decompose. As the Mayhem legend was just then spreading, and as we needed a body in storage in case you ever came to Partap's Planet—"The Observer spread his hands as if to say the rest was self-explanatory.

"I didn't know Partap's Planet was once a cold world," Mayhem said. Partap's Planet, now, was the sweat box of the galaxy, as any Observer—or Observatory staff member, the only outworlders permitted on Partap's Planet—could tell you.

Fordson nodded. "Been hot a lot longer than the Mayhem legend's been around. That's the trouble, Mayhem." Fordson leaned back to light a scented cigarette. He offered one to Mayhem, who declined. For, while in hypnosleep as his *elan* entered Hartoor Vanire's dead body, he had learned that the Partapians carefully avoided all manifestations of outworld behavior, even minor ones like smoking. They were probably the galaxy's most Xenophobic people—and Johnny Mayhem, core of the Mayhem legend, was in a position to know. More than anyone, ever in the history of interstellar travel, Johnny Mayhem had been around. He could literally go anywhere.

For any world which had an

Earthman population and a Galactic League post, however small, had a body in cold storage, waiting for Johnny Mayhem if his services were required. No one knew when or where Mayhem's services might be required. No one knew exactly under what circumstances the Galactic League Council, operating from the Hub of the Galaxy, might summon Mayhem. And only a very few people, including those at the Hub and Galactic League Firstmen on civilized worlds and Observers on primitive worlds, knew the precise mechanics of Mayhem's coming.

Johnny Mayhem, a bodiless sentience. Mayhem—Johnny Marlow, then—who had been chased from Earth, a pariah and a criminal, many years ago, who had been mortally wounded on a wild planet deep within the Sagittarian Swarm, whose life had been saved—after a fashion—by the white magic of the planet. Mayhem, doomed now to possible immortality as a bodiless sentience, an *elan*, which could occupy and activate a corpse if it had been preserved properly . . . an *elan* doomed to wander eternally because it could not remain in one body for more than a month with-

out body and *elan* perishing. Mayhem, who had dedicated his strange, lonely life to the services of the Galactic League because a normal life and normal social relations were not possible for him . . .

"That's the trouble, all right," Observer Fordson repeated. "Partap's Planet is hot. And it's getting hotter."

"Radioactive unbalance?" Mayhem guessed.

Fordson shook his head. "Primary's a very long period variable, getting bigger. In less than a month Partap's Planet won't be inhabitable. In a little more than a month, zinc and lead would be liquid in the natural state on Partap's Planet's surface. So, if you can't convince all of them to leave, in less than a month—"

Mayhem knew what was coming. "But they're Xenophobic. They don't want to leave."

"There are five and a half million of them, Mayhem. Descendants of Earthmen colonizers almost five hundred years ago. They're inbred. After the invasion four hundred years ago—when Hartoor Vanire saved them—they almost died out completely and lost all contact with the thread of history. They're out

of touch with reality, socially. Racial schizophrenia, you might call it. Five million people—obviously we can't force them to leave. There's a fleet of overage Council ships, though, waiting ten million miles out in space, waiting to take them, waiting to save their lives if they'll let us. It's your job to convince them. Yours—as Hartoor Vanire. Well?"

"I'll try, of course," Mayhem said. "Have they been told anything?"

"They've been told everything. They don't believe it. They accept the fact that Partap's Planet is getting hotter every day. They're going to be broiled alive unless they let us evacuate them, and unless you can make them, they won't let us."

"Can I contact you if I need anything?"

It was a routine question, but Mayhem didn't get a routine answer. Observer Fordson shook his head. "That won't be possible," he said. "This post should have been abandoned long ago. We don't do any good here. We're in constant danger of molestation. We only remained on long enough to wait for you. We're packing and pulling out. You'll be absolutely on your own, Mayhem."

"What if I have to pull out? It's possible, you know."

"Can't you contact the Hub, get your *elan* or whatever it is lifted out of Hartoor Vanire's body?"

"Sure—but only through your office. As you know, you have a subspace transmitter attuned to the Hub's frequency. It would be the only one here."

"We won't take it then."

"After you're gone, won't the Partapians loot your headquarters?"

"We won't advertise the fact that we're going."

Mayhem wasn't happy with the situation, but finally shook hands with the Observer, was told a uniform an exact duplicate of the one Hartoor Vanire had died in was waiting for him, and went to find it.

A few moments after he left the room, the picture of health and strength in Hartoor Vanire's superb physique, Observer Fordson unlocked a secret compartment in his desk and twirled the controls of a compact radio unit.

"This is Fordson," he said.

"Yes?" The voice came through static, indistinctly.

"He just left."

"Mayhem?"

"Of course."

"In Hartoor Vanire's body?"

"Same answer."

"I don't like that."

"You think I do?" Observer Fordson demanded.

"You're not Partapiian. You couldn't imagine."

"But I've got a stake in this."

"I say I'm enlightened. I say I don't believe the old superstitions," the radio voice told Fordson. "Yet don't you think I'll be scared—plenty scared, brother—of Hartoor Vanire?"

"But he's your racial hero," Fordson said almost mockingly.

"And wouldn't approve of what you and I are trying to do."

"Well, forget about your native superstitions and get this straight. It isn't Hartoor Vanire. It's Johnny Mayhem."

"You're sure about—what you've told me?"

"Yes, you fool. How many times do I have to say it?" Fordson demanded angrily. "If your people die, if there's no one to claim Partap's Planet but us, there'll be a billion credits for each of us."

"And I? How will I get free?"

The question had been asked before. Fordson sighed. The contact was vital, for two

reasons. One, the original plan regarding Mayhem might go haywire—in which case a Partapian native might be able to handle the bodiless pariah. Two, Partap's Planet couldn't be claimed, afterwards, by anyone but a Partapian. So one native, Fordson's contact, had to live. For a while at least.

Fordson said, "After Mayhem dies, we'll send a ship for you if we're gone. Otherwise, you can just come here and leave with us."

"He'll die—this Mayhem or Hartoor Vanire or whoever he is?"

Fordson smiled. "Before Mayhem took it over, I injected Hartoor Vanire's body with a deadly virus native to your planet but rare on it. The virus is always fatal. The incubation period is only three days. The illness lasts ten days and always ends in death. Does that satisfy you?"

"I just wish it wasn't Hartoor Vanire."

"It isn't Hartoor Vanire, you fool. It's his body. Hartoor Vanire's been dead four hundred years. And I couldn't do anything about it being his body."

"Yes. Well, if it has to be."

"I assure you it does. Mayhem-Hartoor Vanire should

reach the city in about an hour."

"What will he do?"

"He didn't say."

"Then what am I supposed to do?"

"Stall him, you idiot. Stall him three days, until he comes down with the virus. That's all you have to do."

"But if it's contagious—"

"We have the antidote. What are you worrying about? I told you everything would work out all right. Just stall him until he becomes sick," Fordson said, smiling. "You can leave the rest to nature."

"Well, don't forget about me. Don't forget I want to save myself even if the rest of my people won't lift a finger to save their own hides."

"I can't forget about you," Fordson said frankly. "I need you for this, just as you need me. We make a perfect team."

There wasn't any answer. Fordson hung up, wondering in exactly what fashion the deadly virus in Hartoor Vanire's body would kill Mayhem.

The first thing that struck Johnny Mayhem about Partap's Planet was the fierce, the incredible, heat. The very air seemed to scorch and sear. It was difficult to breathe. Heat

haze shimmered everywhere over the flat, dry, dun-colored landscape. Hartoor Vanire's fancy uniform had soaked through with sweat almost at once, and now clung to his big frame unattractively. Partap's Planet, in thirty years, had become a desert of a planet. Its sun, white hot and dazzling, blazed and blurred in the sky. The sky itself was drained of color. It was white, hazy, glarey. And walking the half mile or so from the Observer Station to the nearest Partapian road—and making sure he wasn't seen in the process, an easy thing because the Partapians, who barely tolerated Observer Station, avoided it like the plague—had drained all the strength from Hartoor Vanire's powerful body. Mayhem felt as if he had walked twenty miles.

On the road, he waited for traffic. He waited a surprisingly long time, until he realized that, the dry heat of Partap's Planet making normal agriculture virtually impossible and the Partapians existing on city-grown hydroponics, almost no one lived outside the Partapians' few small cities. The road was dusty, its surface cracked and buckling with heat. Mayhem couldn't help wondering what this same spot was like four

hundred years ago, when Hartoor Vanire had been alive. For Partap's Planet had been a cool, moist garden of a world. It might have even been a Mecca for tourists, except for the Partapian Xenophobia. And now—the lifeless desert.

Something rattled toward Mayhem in a cloud of dust. He heard the clip-clop of hooves, the rumble of wooden wheels, the clatter and squeak of a loose axle. He stood out on the road boldly, wondering what the reaction would be. He was Hartoor Vanire as far as the natives were concerned. And he would be recognized at once. Hartoor Vanire was a demi-god. Everyone had a picture of his face, and an accurate one, in mind. It was as if Lul Hikor, in twenty-fifth century garb, were to stop a thirtieth century Callistan on the streets of Callisto City, or George Washington, in eighteenth century garb, a twentieth century North American, except that Washington had never been made into a demi-god. . . .

The wagon, drawn by a six-limbed, emaciated tholdor with its ribs protruding and its tongue hanging out, approached. Through the dust, Mayhem could see only one

person on the board, and as the wagon came closer he saw it was a girl.

"Hello!" he called.

It wasn't necessary, for she'd seen him. She did something with the reins and the tholdor stopped. She started to get down from the high board. She was young and quite pretty. She was tanned a deep bronze by the sun. She wore a thick coating of sun-cream and a pair of shorts. She looked at Mayhem. Suddenly her mouth went slack. Her hand flew to it. If Mayhem hadn't caught her she'd have fallen to the road.

Such was a Partapian's first view of the reborn Hartoor Vanire. There was a mixture of awe, disbelief, fright.

Merta Tydal's eyelids fluttered.

It was hot. But it was always hot. It hadn't been heat exhaustion which had made her faint, she remembered vaguely. No, something else. She had been driving along, and . . .

But why had she been driving along? Remember that first, she told herself. Remember that and you'll remember the rest of it. She could have opened her eyes, she knew that. But somehow she was afraid to. As if there was

something she would see which she was afraid to see.

Anyway, she thought, allowing herself to remain limp, her father had called her on the radio—it was one of the few radio sets she had ever seen, and she was proud of her father even if most of the people feared and mistrusted devices like radios. Her father had wanted her to drive into Partap City and pick him up and return to the farm with him. The farm—she was proud of that too. By careful irrigation and backbreaking labor, they had managed to keep the farm going, her father and Merta. It was one of the three remaining farms in the neighborhood of Partap City. It didn't produce much, but compared to the hydroponics fare, what it produced was tremendous luxury.

Anyway, her father had wanted her to pick him up. Odd, though, he had specified the Observer Station Road, which was a little out of the way. Still, Merta had obeyed him. She had driven the wagon, empty, along Observer Station Road, and then, and then . . .

Merta shuddered.

"Easy now," a deep voice said. "You're going to be all right. Just take it easy."

All at once memory came

flooding back. A tall figure had appeared. He was wearing clothing—not merely the shorts and sun-cream which was all the garb a Partapian wore these days. The clothing was — a uniform. Sweaty, dusty, wrinkled, but clearly a red and black uniform like the one in all the histories, in the museum in Partap City, in . . .

And the face. There had been no mistaking the face. She knew that face—every Partapian did—as well as she knew her father's—or her own.

She let her eyelids flutter again.

"If there was any water I'd bring you some," the deep voice said. She liked the voice, then immediately thought that was presumptuous on her part. Where did she get off *liking* his voice? What did it matter if she liked it? It was *His* voice, wasn't it? It had to be, for there was no mistaking that uniform. The uniform, of course, could have been a counterfeit. There was no mistaking that face, or that shock of dead-white hair . . .

"I—I don't need water," she said. She opened her eyes. He was squatting. He had cradled her head on his knee. His face was very close to hers. She felt herself becoming giddy again. It was—but

she couldn't bring herself to think his name now, not until she was absolutely sure.

The people were in trouble, Merta knew that. The outworlders said if they didn't leave Partap, and soon, they would die. But what did Outworlders know? Still, it grew hotter every day, and that was why the Outworlders said they should leave. And wasn't it said that in time of greatest trouble Hartoor Vanire would return to save his people once more? There! She had thought his name. She knew it was he! She knew it!

"I'd like to get up now, please," she said.

He helped her to her feet.

She immediately fell forward.

At first Mayhem thought she was going to faint again, perhaps from heat prostration as well as shock, but then he realized that she was in control of her limbs this time. She bowed at his feet, her graceful body curling like a night-closing flower, and kissed the toe of his boot.

"Lord Hartoor," she said. "Lord Hartoor, is it really you?"

He felt the blood rise in his face. It actually embarrassed him, which was surprising, for Johnny Mayhem had been

through a great deal—although, he had to admit, he'd never been taken for a demigod and a racial hero. He did not want to go through with it. He wanted to tell this pretty girl the truth or as much of the truth as she could understand, but he knew that was the wrong thing to do. He knew that—if he was going to help the Partapians—he had to be their Hartoor Vanire.

Actually, it wouldn't be lying. Physically, he *was* Hartoor Vanire.

"Rise," he said solemnly. "There isn't any need to do that."

"But you are—"

"Yes. Look at me. Could I be anyone but Hartoor Vanire?"

"No, Lord."

He helped her back into the wagon. She seemed to shrink from his touch. "I—I'm a little afraid," she admitted. "I don't know . . . can't believe . . . oh, you're here, you're here, you're going to save us! Aren't you? Aren't you?"

Mayhem said: "You'll have to save yourselves."

"Then . . ."

He smiled at her. She smiled back shyly. "Maybe I can be of help," he said. "It's why I'm here."

That much, at least, she

took for granted. "Of course," she said.

Mayhem climbed into the wagon with her.

"Heading into Partap City?" he asked.

"Yes. My father sent for me. What are you going to do?"

"Who's your father?"

"Usin Tydal. I'm Merta. Father is one of the three farmers left in Partap Province. He's also on our City Council. He—"

"Then we can start with your father. I want to call a meeting of your people. Do you think they'll listen to what I have to say?"

"What a question, Lord! To Hartoor Vanire? They'd do anything you said. They'd die for you."

"Anything—even if it meant listening to the outworlders' instructions?" This was a tough question.

Merta didn't answer. The tholdor commenced plodding along the road. It turned around once, its intelligent and doleful eyes looking unhappier than ever when they saw the extra weight it had to carry. At least, Johnny Mayhem thought with a smile, the tholdor didn't think he was a god.

Finally Merta said, "I—I guess so."

"But they'd feel ambivalent about it?"

"Ambiva . . ."

"Be confused. Want to listen to me but want to *not* obey the outworlders."

"Yes. Yes, Lord."

"What about your father?"

"He's—I guess you'd say enlightened. He even talks with outworlders sometimes."

"You mean at the Observer Station?"

"Yes, Lord."

Mayhem wondered why Fordson hadn't told him about that. Tydal would be an obvious place to start, then. Well, maybe Fordson wanted him to find things out for himself.

"All right," Mayhem said. "Then we'll start with your father. Will you take me to him?"

"Yes, Lord."

The tholdor plodded along, the wagon creaked, the wheels rumbled, and slowly the few miles between the Station and Partap City rolled by. They met no one on the road. Through the heat-haze Mayhem could see the first buildings of the city ahead of them, but still no people, when Merta said:

"Would you mind a suggestion, Lord?"

"Not at all. I wish you'd make it."

"Your uniform. The white hair is bad enough, begging your pardon, Lord, but the uniform! Would you remove at least the jacket?"

"Why?" Mayhem thought he knew what she had in mind, but wanted to hear it in her words.

"Because—well, my reaction was typical. If there's any urgency, if you want to get anyplace, you'd better meet my father first, and in private."

Mayhem knew she was right. The last thing he wanted now was an hysterical mob scene to delay what must be done. Usin Tydal, a member of the City Council, could be a big help. Mayhem removed the uniform jacket and shirt and sat bare-chested next to Merta. Time enough for crowds and adulation after he'd met with the authorities, he thought.

In the dust, his face and white hair hardly attracted attention in the city. No one stopped them as they went slowly through the crumbling, dry, parched streets. To Mayhem, Partap City looked like a city on the brink of eternity. All the people were slender—liquid - starvation, Mayhem thought—some of them like the tholdor, to the point of emaciation. There was no

water anywhere. All of it, all they could wring from their parched planet, Mayhem realized, probably went into the hydroponics tanks. Even the buildings looked ready to crumble with dry rot. Sandstone, Mayhem thought. They would crumble. Some of them already had. They needed moisture desperately — and would not get it. As far as being an abode of life, Partap's Planet was dying.

The wagon stopped. The tholder sat down, the wagon dipping perilously forward.

"Here we are, Lord," Merta said.

A few minutes later, Mayhem was talking to Usin Tydal in the comparative coolness within one of the sandstone buildings.

Merta's father was a surprisingly young-looking, vigorous and powerful Partapian. He had received Mayhem with the expected mixture of awe and deference, saying the name Hartoor Vanire over and over again. Then, answering Mayhem's questions but offering no information on his own initiative—as Mayhem had expected—he outlined the story of the Partapian reaction to the climactic change on their planet.

The heat had started (he told Mayhem) hardly more than thirty years ago. Therefore, the changing climate had encompassed one generation—slow enough to avoid panic, fast enough to evoke concern. During those thirty years, the Partapians had not known what to do. Perhaps—Tydal did not say this, but it was latent in what he did say—they might have come to the conclusion that evacuation of their homeland was their only hope. But once the outworlders suggested that and, within the bounds of interstellar law, urged it, the Partapians had become truculent.

Mayhem asked, "Do you believe migration's the answer, Usin Tydal?"

"Lord Hartoor, I don't know! I wish I knew, but I don't. I'll tell you this, though: no outworlder will lead my people from their homes against their will."

"But what about Hartoor Vanire?"

Tydal shrugged. "How can I say, Lord? You are—what you are. Still, I have heard that the outworlders are themselves preparing to leave—three days hence they shall be gone. So it seems to me that you should delay presenting yourself to my people until the outworlders are gone.

They will be jubilant then and—well, it might be reasoned that you waited, not manifesting yourself, until the last taint of an outworld footstep was gone from our land. The people would like that.”

Mayhem felt no sympathy at all for the Partapian Xenophobia, but that wasn't his problem right now. He said, “So you think I ought to wait three days, doing absolutely nothing until the Observer and his station staff leave Partap's Planet?”

“Yes, Lord. Three days. After that—we'll see.”

Mayhem looked at Merta. She smiled and nodded, then lowered her eyes shyly, as if even the smiling agreement with what her father had said was presumptuous on her part.

“The only thing is,” Mayhem said, “we only have a month. In a month Partap's Planet couldn't support human life. In a month, you'd all be dead.”

Usin Tydal didn't say anything.

“So I'm not happy about wasting three days doing nothing. Figure it would take another four or five days for the migration fleet to planet-fall and perhaps a week to get the exodus rolling smoothly; that doesn't leave much time.”

For an instant, Usin Tydal's eyes went hard and cold. It was as though he had drawn a veil over them, and it surprised Mayhem. But then the veil seemed to lift, and Tydal was smiling at him politely. “It's only a suggestion, Lord Hartoor,” he said. “But I do know my people and I say if we called a special Council meeting now, if you went before them prematurely, that is, before the outworlders leave our soil for good, you would be making a mistake. All you'd have to wait is three days. But of course, the decision is yours. I won't presume to try to tell Hartoor Vanire what to do. But I do know my people.”

Was there the faintest unconscious stress of the word “my”? Mayhem couldn't be sure, but thought there was. Meaning his—Tydal's people, but not Hartoor Vanire's? That didn't make sense. The demi-god Hartoor Vanire belonged body and soul to the humanoid Partapians. Then was Tydal unconsciously suggesting that he thought Mayhem was an imposter? But he'd have no reason to think so. He hadn't even known Hartoor Vanire was coming until Merta brought him in, had he? And, as a member of

the City Council of the largest city on the planet, he *did* know the mood of his people. If he suggested a wait of three days, Mayhem thought it best to go along with him.

"All right," he said. "I'll wait three days. There's a Council meeting then?"

"Yes, Lord. That has its advantages too. We won't have to call a special meeting."

"Good. Until then—"

"Until then, Lord Hartoor," Tydal said smoothly, "it would be best if you remained in this house, without venturing outside at all. After all, with a face and hair like yours, you couldn't expect to keep your identity secret."

That was true, so Mayhem didn't push it. But three days! Three days out of a month, wasted. While Partap's Planet approached the day its surface would be hot enough to broil any remaining human inhabitants alive. . . .

On the third day, Mayhem awoke with a severe headache. The delay had seemed endless, although Merta Tydal had spent most of her time with him, telling him the lore and history of the four hundred years which had intervened between Hartoor Vanire's first incarnation and his second. For some reason, Usin

Tydal had seemed to object to all the time his daughter spent with Hartoor Vanire—as if, somehow, he feared their close association as something which might prove harmful to the daughter he so obviously loved. That, like so many other things about Usin Tydal, puzzled Mayhem.

He didn't say anything about the headache, because this was the day the outworlders left Partap's Planet. And tonight, as scheduled, the Council meeting would take place. It was what Mayhem had been waiting for.

By mid-afternoon, though, the headache was really fierce. Mayhem also thought he had a fever, although the suffocating heat of Partap's Planet might have been responsible for that. It also could have been responsible for his dizziness and for the blurring of his vision, which also was quite apparent by mid-afternoon.

But it could not explain the late-afternoon chills. He had contracted a native disease, Mayhem decided, and since the meeting was so important, he reversed his decision. He *would* tell Tydal of his symptoms, for perhaps it was a very common ailment on Partap's Planet and could be alleviated easily, thus leaving him

at full strength for the Council.

As soon as Mayhem began to talk of his symptoms, Tydal seemed to move away from him, waiting uncomfortably at the far end of the room, hardly seeming to listen at all.

"Well," Mayhem asked, "can anything be done about it? A drug or something to keep me going tonight? You know how important this is."

"Yes . . . yes . . ." Tydal said. He seemed bemused. "A drug, of course. I'll bring a drug."

A few minutes later, Mayhem was given a packet of powder grayish in color and evil-smelling. Tydal brought a cup of hydrobroth. Just then Merta came into the room.

"Please! Merta!" Usin Tydal cried. "Leave us in privacy."

"But I—Hartoor Vanire! Lord, what is it?"

Mayhem smiled. Her face swam closer blurringly. Mayhem said, "I guess even reincarnated racial heroes aren't immune to disease."

"I warn you, Merta!" Tydal cried. "Keep away from him."

"Why, what's the matter with Lord Hartoor, Father?"

"He is sick."

"I know, but you talk as if you know what he has, as if—"

"No, no! I don't want to take chances with my only daughter, that's all. Here, Lord Hartoor, drink this. Take the powder I have given you."

Vision blurring, Mayhem saw Tydal's face, the powder, the thick cup containing broth. The powder had a very strong, objectionable odor. Mayhem brought it to his lips. The fever was roaring in his ears. . . .

"Wait!" a voice seemed to call from a long way off. "Wait, what is it I smell?" It was Merta's voice.

"Be still, child!"

"No. I'd know that smell anywhere. We . . . it . . ."

Mayhem heard the sound of flesh striking flesh. His vision might have been playing tricks on him—or else Usin Tydal had struck his daughter in the face with a hard open palm. He heard Tydal say, "Get out of here, I command you." There was panic in his tone.

The girl's voice, when she spoke, sounded bewildered. "That's — that's — Father, why? Father, it's dakbore. You know it's dakbore," she said accusingly.

Mayhem tried to get up. He'd been reclining on a couch covered by a thin old blanket which helped ward off the

chills accompanying his high fever.

"If it's dakbore," Tydal asked his daughter, "then why doesn't Hartoor Vanire know that? Dakbore's one of the oldest drugs we have."

"I—"

"I'll tell you why. Because this isn't Hartoor Vanire. It's an imposter—and I even know the imposter's name."

"Father, you don't know what you're saying!"

"Take the powder. You will take the powder now," Tydal's voice said.

The fever, somehow, had seemed to pluck Mayhem's will from his body. He felt no strength in his limbs and almost no desire to fight the lassitude which crept over him. If the powder—what was it called, dakbore?—would bring rest, he ought to take it.

"Lord Hartoor, I beg you!"

Merta's voice.

"Lord Hartoor, it's a deadly poison. You've got to listen. I know you're sick, but you've got to . . . let go of me, Father! . . . Lord Hartoor, on the farm . . . to kill cattle before marketing . . . dakbore . . ."

At the last moment, he brushed the hand away and sat up groggily. The evil-smelling powder sifted down on his bare chest, the hot broth spill-

ed on his shoulder, and Tydal cursed him fluently and with imagination. The cursing finally brought Mayhem out of his lethargy as nothing else had. For if Usin Tydal cursed him, then the Partapian indeed believed he was an imposter. And therefore, with his Xenophobia, could cheerfully kill him. But how did he know Mayhem was an imposter?

Mayhem lurched off the couch. The room whirled, then steadied. All his blood seemed to rush to his legs and he almost collapsed. Tydal and his daughter were struggling together silently, their bodies gleaming with sun oil. Mayhem, hardly strong enough to stand, found a vase with some farm-grown flowers, and brought it down on Tydal's head.

The man fell as if he'd been axed. With a little cry Merta kneeled beside him.

"Father, Father, I—"

Mayhem kneeled there too. Tydal groaned. Mayhem said, "Listen, Merta. If you're with me, we'll have to tie him up and . . ."

He didn't have to finish it. Merta disappeared, and came back in a moment with rope. They bound Tydal's hands and feet, finishing the job just as he regained consciousness.

"Fool!" was the first thing

the Partapian Councilman said. "He's an outworlder named Mayhem, masquerading as our venerated Hartoor Vanire. Ask him to deny it."

Merta looked at Mayhem. Mayhem knew that without help he could never return to the Observer Station. But he had to get there before Hull Fordson and his staff left, because perhaps Fordson knew of an antidote to his fever. Or, if worst came to worst, he could contact the Hub and desert Hartoor Vanire's stricken body before body and *elan* perished together. Of course, that would mean giving up hope for Partap Planet's five and a half millions, and he wouldn't do that unless he had to, but one way or the other, he had to get to Observer Station and couldn't in his condition unless Merta took him there.

"Well, Hartoor Vanire," Merta said slowly. "I'm waiting."

"You see?" Tydal said triumphantly. "You see?"

"Look at me," Mayhem asked Merta, "can you do that?"

"Yes, of course."

"What do you see?"

"You know what I see."

"You see Hartoor Vanire's face and hair, his body . . ."

"Yes. Yes, that is what I

see. But if Father is right, a clever disguise—"

"No," Mayhem said. "I am exactly what you see. This is no disguise." It wasn't a lie. It was the truth as far as it went. Someday, perhaps, he would be able to tell Merta *all* the truth.

"Then you *are* Hartoor Vanire!" Mayhem's vision cleared long enough for him to see tears in her eyes.

"I'm here to help you. That, too, is truth."

She started to bow. He took her arm and didn't let her. Without objecting, she watched Mayhem force a gag into her father's mouth. He tied it in place with a scarf she gave him.

"Will my father be all right?"

"Yes, but we can't let him stand between five million people and their one chance for survival, can we?"

"You mean the outworlders are right, Partap's Planet will have to be evacuated?"

Mayhem nodded. He started toward the door, and felt his legs buckling. Merta caught him when his knees hit the floor.

"You're a very sick man."

"I've got to get to the League Observation Station."

"You should stay in bed."

"Got to . . . your father wanted to make sure I didn't go. Don't you see?"

"You want me to take you?"

Tydal, bound and gagged on the floor, was shaking his head from side to side furiously. Mayhem crawled to him and removed the gag.

"If you have something to say, say it."

"Don't take her. Don't take my daughter there, please."

"Afraid the outworlders will contaminate her?"

"No. *You'll* contaminate her, but that isn't what I mean. Fordson. It's Fordson."

"What about Fordson?"

"He'll stop at nothing. You are in no condition to defend yourself. If you take Merta there he'll kill both of you."

"Fordson? Hull Fordson?"

"Don't take her. I love my daughter. Please don't take her!"

"What about Fordson?"

"If you leave her here, I'll tell you everything."

But Merta said softly: "I'm going with him, Father. Nothing can stop me."

Usin Tydal's face was bathed in sweat. Mayhem had never seen a man so obviously torn between two opposing desires.

"But Merta—"

"Father, are you trying to

say you were working with— with the outworlders—against your own people?"

"No! No, of course not. *For* my own people. For them, yes. Unless you think we all ought to migrate to some unknown, nameless, despicable alien place, led there by this Judas-piper in the guise of our great racial hero. Is that what you think? That we ought to follow this piper to our destruction, alone, away from home, among aliens?"

"But you *were* working with the outworlders?"

"With their leader, child. Yes. With him," Tydal said wearily. "If you're going, you will have to go armed. He'd shoot you down in cold blood. He's utterly ruthless."

"What's he after?" Mayhem asked. He was resting now, kneeling, his head lowered to bring blood to his brain. But the fever pulsed behind his eyes, roared in his ears, was a hot dull ache in his throat.

Usin Tydal said: "There are enormous deposits of uranium ore on Partap's Planet. Only Fordson and I know of their existence. Fordson will sell out anyone for them—"

"And you?" Mayhem asked.

"I? It isn't like that with me at all. Fordson thinks I want to be his partner in this.

He believes—foolishly, like all the outworlders—that if we Partapians remain here at home we'll all be incinerated. Thus he wants to avoid migration at all costs. Then afterwards, he thinks, I'll claim the planet—escaping with him as the last living native—and we'll share the uranium fortune. Well, I don't want any fortune! I just want to make certain my people stay home, here on Partap, where they belong.

"So I played along with Fordson, pretending to fear for my life, pretending to insist on assurances that he wouldn't desert me here when the so-called end came, when I only wanted to help him forestall migration until the outworlder fools realized nothing was going to happen to Partap's Planet which we could not withstand."

Merta was smiling radiantly. Her father hadn't been a traitor after all. But Mayhem said:

"Maybe from your point of view, Tydal, you've been noble. But all along you've made one mistake."

"Yes?"

"Yes. The outworlders are right. You're all doomed unless you evacuate Partap's Planet, as the outworlders told you."

"Well, it won't matter to you," Tydal said, "not that I believe you. It won't matter to you because Fordson saw to it you'd die before you could change things here."

"You mean Fordson's responsible for—"

"Your fever? Yes, of course. And only Fordson had the antidote."

Mayhem demanded: "Why are you telling me this? Aren't you working at cross-purposes with yourself?"

"It's Merta. Merta's with you. If you're leaving me here, I want you to know about the fever, in case Merta contracts it. I also want you to know about Fordson. He'll stop at nothing. You'll have to be armed and ready for violence. But you can hardly stand on your feet. Take me!" Tydal said suddenly, impulsively. "Take me with you!"

"Changing sides?" Mayhem asked.

"Maybe I want to make amends."

"If you want to do that, there's one way you can help me."

"How's that?"

"You delayed me three days for no reason at all except to wait for the fever—right?"

Tydal admitted it.

"All right. Make prepara-

tions. I'm coming back tonight to that Council meeting."

"As Hartoor Vanire?"

"As Hartoor Vanire."

"You want me to tell them?"

"I want them ready to listen to what Hartoor Vanire has to say."

"But why should I do that?"

"If you want to help your people, you'll do it."

Tydal didn't answer. Mayhem didn't think he had any choice. He untied the man. Tydal sprang to his feet and for a moment Mayhem thought the Partapian was going to attack him bodily, an attack which Mayhem, his own body racked by fever and sapped of its strength, would not have been able to fight off. But Tydal merely walked by Mayhem, went to a wall shelf, and got something. It was, Mayhem saw, an ornate hunting knife. Tydal pressed it into his hand. "It isn't much, but it's all I have."

"To protect your daughter?" Mayhem asked.

"I don't know. I don't know why I'm giving it to you. Maybe it's because you're risking your own life—for us. Don't I have to give you the benefit of every doubt?"

Mayhem didn't answer. Ty-

dal turned, not talking to his daughter, and stalked from the room.

"You'll take me?" Mayhem said. "I couldn't make it on foot alone."

"I've still got my tholdor wagon."

"What I told you before was only half the truth. This is Hartoor Vanire—it's Hartoor Vanire's body. But the man talking to you is not Hartoor Vanire. I am Johnny Mayhem."

"An outworlder?"

"An outworlder—yes. Don't you think we're all outworlders, relatively? Humanity originally came from Earth, but Earth's only one stellar world among thousands now. We're all outworlders."

"You're an Earthman?"

"I have no planetality. Well, will you come?"

"If it—it's Hartoor Vanire's body, he wouldn't let you share it unless you wanted to help my people. I'll come."

Mayhem got up and staggered toward the door. Merta took his arm and put it around her shoulder, helping him to the tholdor wagon outside. A moment later they were underway.

At first Mayhem remained on the board with Merta, but pretty soon he stretched out

in the back of the wagon. Merta stopped the tholdor long enough to cover him with the blanket she'd brought, for the chills were racking his body again despite the late afternoon heat.

Mayhem needed medical care, and knew it. Instead, he was rushing across a dying planet to confront the one man he should have been able to trust here on Partap's Planet—a man who had turned out to be a traitor not only to the Galactic trust he was sworn to uphold, but to the doomed people it was his job to help. Mayhem shook his head in wonderment. There were always people like Fordson—stoppers of progress, wrongdoers running roughshod over anything or anyone to achieve their own ends—but rarely in history have they held the fate of five million innocent people in their hands.

"Much further?" Mayhem asked.

The wagon bounced and clattered. The tholdor, which had been resting three days, was full of energy. A hot wind fanned Mayhem's face when he lifted himself into a sitting position. They were speeding along the dusty, deserted road.

"We're almost there. Rest, can't you?"

Mayhem rested. His senses wandered. He day-dreamed of coolness, moisture, comfort. Then the wagon came to a stop, the lathering tholdor snorted, and Merta said:

"Here we are. But the place looks deserted."

Her voice was quiet, awed. Mayhem realized she must have been frightened half out of her mind. She'd never willingly approached the abode of the outworlders before. Like all her people, she hated them, mistrusted them, feared them. Maybe, Mayhem thought, if for each Hull Fordson in the galaxy there was one Merta Tydal, the universe wasn't in such a bad way after all.

Then the meaning of what she'd said came to him. *Here we are. But the place looks deserted.*

Were they too late? Was Fordson already gone?

It was a large low sandstone building in the freestyle popular everywhere in the galaxy except on Partap's Planet. It was low, rambling, shaped to meet its own requirements rather than to fit some preconceived standards.

Partap Planet's sun had gone down. Dusk was settling over the parched landscape. And the large low building,

living quarters as well as office space for the two-dozen staff members of the Observer Station, was deserted.

Mayhem turned to Merta. He was about to tell her they'd have to go back to the city and hope he could withstand the fever long enough to convince the Council, when she cried:

"Look! Look, a light!"

It was true. A light had winked on in one of the wings of the building. It was, Mayhem remembered, Hull Fordson's office.

"Let's go," he said. He held the ornate hunting knife in his hand. The blade was six inches long and well-honed.

But wouldn't do him much good against a blaster. At least it was a weapon.

They reached the window without Hull Fordson becoming aware of them. Mayhem looked in. Fordson, his big body crouching, was busy burning papers in a portable incinerator. Mayhem drew Merta away from the window. Parked beyond the end of the sandstone wing was Fordson's one-man space-cruiser. Probably, Mayhem thought, he'd come back alone after the staff had been evacuated, to destroy in privacy any papers concerned with a prior dis-

covery of the uranium deposits.

"Listen," Mayhem whispered, "he'll be armed with a blaster, which is deadly at a much longer range than I could hope to throw this knife, even if I could throw it accurately. But I've got to go in there because we can't wait for him to come out, not if we want to get back to that Council meeting before your father has a change of heart and tells them I'm not Hartoor Vannire."

"He wouldn't. Not any more."

Mayhem ignored what she said: she might have been right, but it couldn't be chanced.

"Make some kind of diversion at the window," Mayhem said. "But don't show yourself. Don't let him see you, because he'll shoot on sight. Throw pebbles. Something like that will do it. And keep down out of sight."

"And you?"

"I'm using the door," Mayhem said, and moved off unsteadily toward it.

With the last of the mining papers burned, Hull Fordson had nothing to worry about. He smiled, thinking of the great wealth which awaited him. *If* Tydal played ball, he

thought. But of course Tydal would play ball. Why shouldn't he? Even now, Tydal was probably making sure that the stricken Mayhem would remain helplessly in bed until, finally, he died.

So, there was nothing to be uneasy about.

Still, Fordson almost jumped out of his chair when something rattled against the window.

He went over there, withdrawing the blaster from its holster, and looked out. He didn't see anything. The night was hot and still. But something had rattled the window. Fordson opened it and felt a blast of hot, dry air force its way into the air-conditioned room. Fordson poked his head out, and his right arm, which held the blaster. Still, he didn't see a thing.

Then he heard something . . .

Inside!

He whirled, bringing the blaster up. His eyes bulged. It was Mayhem.

Mayhem's hand closed on Fordson's fat wrist. They struggled for the blaster, and slowly Fordson forced Mayhem back and brought the muzzle down almost to where he could use it. Mayhem had startled him—but Mayhem was weak, weak with fever.

After Fordson killed him, after the natives who were bound to loot the Observer Station, found a reincarnated Hartoor Vanire murdered in the outworlder headquarters, it would really confirm their Xenophobia. Well, what did he care? He had more important things to think about. And besides, all the Partapians were doomed.

Mayhem knew he was fighting for his life. He also knew he had very little strength left to fight with. Fordson, sweating, grunting, brought the blaster down almost on a level with his head. A few more inches . . .

Still managing to hold the muzzle off with his left hand, Mayhem swung his right, which held the knife. It sliced through fat and grated on bone. Fordson screamed, dropping the blaster. Mayhem had severed the tendons of his right arm.

Cowering in a corner, staring in horrified amazement at the blood dripping from his fingertips to the floor, Fordson waited for Mayhem to say something. When the sick man didn't, Fordson blurted, "Please, I beg you, I'll bleed to death! Don't let me bleed to death!"

The blood flowed freely but

didn't pump out, so no artery had been severed. Fordson didn't have to worry about bleeding to death, but Mayhem didn't tell him that.

"Where's the antidote?" he asked.

"Wh-what antidote?" Fordson's eyes, round and fearful, wavered between the blood and the knife blade. Mayhem held the knife loosely, his arm down, the blade pointing up at Fordson's belly at an angle, ready for instant use.

"You know what antidote. Unless you forgot. Unless you want to bleed to death."

"No—no. Anything you say. I'll give it to you. Just stop the bleeding."

"First get some paper," Mayhem ordered. Fordson got it "Write this." Mayhem dictated a complete confession, having Fordson fill in the details of the uranium find. Then, before Fordson signed it, Mayhem asked,

"What about Tydal?"

"That fool? It's been a game between us. He thought I thought he was serious about the uranium. I know he really believed he was helping his people. Then, afterwards, I could make him claim the lifeless planet for both of us, or else report him to the League for what he'd done. If

he tried to implicate me, it would be my word against his, and I'm an Observer."

"You *were*," Mayhem said. "Sign it."

Fordson signed.

Tydal had been foolish, Mayhem now knew, but Fordson had exonerated him.

"The bleeding!" Fordson gasped, fear in his eyes.

"Merta," Mayhem called.

A moment later, the girl appeared.

Mayhem took charge of the confession while, at Fordson's directions, Merta found the antidote and injected it in Mayhem's arm. Then Mayhem found the pressure point in Fordson's fat armpit and stopped the bleeding.

Leaving Fordson there, they went outside and returned to Partap City in his one-man cruiser. It was a tight squeeze and they'd be breathing the same air, which meant that Merta would probably contract the virus infection, so they brought along the antidote.

"What will he do now?" Merta asked.

Mayhem shrugged. For the first time in hours, his head felt better. His vision had cleared considerably, too. Apparently the antidote would act swiftly.

As it turned out—but May-

hem didn't find that out until afterwards — Fordson had rushed outside to the tholdor wagon. But the wary six-legged animal hadn't trusted him. And had stamped him to death.

For Mayhem, the rest was easy. Usin Tydal had informed the Council that Hartoor Vanire had returned to save his people in their dire need. They had been skeptical, of course, but since a meeting was scheduled anyway, they waited. Tydal, for his part, still believed Mayhem's—and the outworlders' — solution was wrong. But he had nothing else to offer, and the steadily mounting heat might—just might—end in the disaster predicted by the outworlders.

Mayhem came on foot to the torchlit meeting, leaving the space-cruiser half a mile away. He was fully recovered by then, and felt the strength surging through Hartoor Vanire's body.

The Councilmen—not merely City Council people, but representatives of every community on Partap's Planet—fell to their knees when they saw the tall, proud figure striding through the torchlight toward them. The white shock of hair was unmistak-

able, as was the red and black uniform which Merta had brought for Mayhem to wear. He was their leader.

"Hartoor Vanire! Hartoor Vanire!"

It rose like a tide from all sides. It roared and surged through the night. "Hartoor Vanire!"

Then they were silent.

Mayhem spoke. It was the longest speech he had ever made, and the most important. Five million lives hung in the balance.

He told them essentially what he had told the Tydals. Every human being in the galaxy, on every one of the thousands of inhabited worlds, was an outworlder from someone else's point of view. But all were men, all were part of mankind, all had worked together to produce an interworld order beneficial to all—except Partap's Planet, which ignored it.

Mayhem concluded: "Once I saved you from outworld disaster. But it was never my intent to condemn all intercourse with outworlders as evil. We are a community of worlds, or we are nothing. The galaxy not only wants to save you, it wants you to participate in mankind's great adventure. Will you stick your heads in a hole in the sands

and die—or look upwards and outwards to your salvation?"

There wasn't a sound when he finished.

Then someone cried out: "Hartoor Vanire didn't come back to see us die!"—and that did it. The surging tide of sound swept over them again.

Delegates from all over Partap's Planet rushed forward with their pledges of evacuation. Usin Tydal muttered, "I hope you know what you're doing. You've got them now. You've really got them."

Mayhem knew, of course. The population of Partap's

Planet would be saved. Another home, somewhere in the shoreless sea of space, would be found for the Partapians. And they would join the community of worlds.

With Merta—who never left his side until the migration was completed three weeks later, and who by then was convinced that Mayhem really was Hartoor Vanire because he displayed such fantastic leadership in organizing the migration—Mayhem went to call the waiting fleet of ships.

THE END



"This is Hollywood. No one will notice us here."

No Room In Heaven

By O. H. LESLIE

EVEN his last thought was detached and scientific.

He observed it all. The sudden thin white vein in the beaker. The purple, angry froth. The flare of blinding light, the hollow boom of exploding chemicals.

And that was the way he died, in a laboratory after working hours, with fragments of a shattered beaker still in his hand.

He opened his eyes and found a bird on his shoulder.

It was a small, many-colored bird. When he lifted himself from the soft ground, it was startled, and flew away into the bright sky.

He watched its flight, feeling a pleasant lassitude. He yawned and stretched, and scratched his chest languidly.

Scientific investigation is a worthy pursuit of course. Even the investigation of Heaven itself. So we can't blame these scientists for sending an investigator. But heaven help the poor fellow they sent!

The silky, flowing robe that covered him felt cool against his skin.

A rabbit bounded out in front of him, stopped short, wheeled comically, and bounded off in another direction. A smaller bunny leaped after it. He found himself chuckling quietly, then laughing aloud, uproariously, at this little chase, this beautiful, sun-brilliant day, this glorious magic of being alive.

Alive?

He seemed to hear a voice, distant and musical. He spun about. There was no one in sight.

"Who's there?" he said.

No answer came. All he could hear were peaceful, pastoral sounds: the bubbling conversation of far-off waters, rustled leaves, the

tender noises of little animals.

Behind him, in the lush green branches of a majestic tree, a robin voiced a sudden inspiration.

Unconsciously, tears came to his eyes, an accompaniment of stillness in his breast. From somewhere, lilting harp-like notes of song, a woman's voice joined the robin's chorus.

He sank to his knees.

"It's Heaven!" he said.

On the green grass carpet, he sobbed freely and happily.

Later, he found an orchard.

When he had dined gratefully on the succulent fruit, he stretched out beneath a heavy-burdened peach tree and dozed peacefully. His dreams were troubled, but their memory vanished quickly when he awoke. The sun still shone overhead, but the blue had deepened into an azure hue that thrilled him. A formation of geese honked its way across the sky, and small furry animals gamboled unafraid over the grassy hills and plains, in and out of picturesque wooded groves. Crystal-clear streams bubbled here and there; within a mile or so he could see a valley, with an ovoid lake lying on the bot-

tom like the mirror of a lovely woman.

"It is beautiful," said a voice.

He looked up, unsurprised, smiling.

She wasn't beautiful, but her skin was pearly, translucent. Her brown hair was as polished clean as the lake in the valley, and fell behind her shoulders in a breathtaking cascade.

"You won't miss anything of that other world," she said. "Not after awhile. What's your name?"

"Raven," he said, recalling it for the first time.

"I am Lily."

"How long have you been here?"

"I don't know. Does it matter?"

He saw now that she carried a bouquet of many flowers in her hands. "Look!" she cried delightedly. "Marigolds. Azaleas. Zinnias! A beautiful pink dahlia. And roses—oh, lovely roses!"

He looked at her, her face radiant in the frame of floral colors. But then a more spectacular display took his attention.

"The sunset!" he almost shouted. "Look—"

The girl drew in her breath sharply. Together, they gazed at the swirling,



His trip into the hereafter was sudden and violent.

fiery, orange and blue patterns, moving with unearthly speed and glory across the horizon.

"And soon," said the girl reverently, "the Sleep comes, and the Dawn."

"Sleep?" Raven laughed. "Not for me! I've done with sleeping for today!"

"You'll see," said Lily with a mysterious smile. "After the sunset comes the Sleep. It is the Way. It was always the Way."

Raven laughed again, but this time because he knew the girl was right. Torpor filled his limbs, and dragged at his eyelids. He yawned magnificently.

Lily had stretched herself on the ground, her eyes already closed.

"You're right," said Raven, smiling sleepily. "But tomorrow's another day!"

When he awoke, Lily was gone, but all else was the same. The birds arched swiftly overhead, the streams rippled just as softly, invitingly. The air was pleasantly warm and flower-fragrant. But he knew that something was wrong.

He had a headache.

He searched his mind for the reason. He tried to probe back into the memories of

his dreams. But with each waking moment, those dreams receded far back into the unreachable corridor of the subconscious.

But he definitely, painfully, annoyingly, had a headache.

He heard the sound of laughter. He rose to his feet and walked towards it, enjoying the feel of the luxurious grass between his toes. When he finally came to its source, he paused a moment to appraise the poetry of Lily's graceful movements as she chased a snow-white puppy across the fields. She stopped when she saw Raven, and the puppy, disappointed, worried her bare feet with his young teeth.

"Hello!" she called gaily, the laughter still on her face.

When he came up to her, she surprised him by flinging her arms around his neck.

"I'm so glad to see you!"

"I'm glad to see you." He blushed, and disengaged her arms.

She led him to the comfortable shade of a great elm, not twenty paces from a lawn that fronted an alabaster building of chaste white simplicity. There was one door, seemingly carved into the stone, but no visible windows. Raven was curious,

but Lily's curiosity about himself was more demanding.

"I know!" she said, plucking at a falling leaf. "You were a hunter—a bold hunter, with a falcon on your wrist."

Raven laughed, his eyes caught by hers, held by their happiness and directness.

"Or a teacher. Tutoring young children in mathematics. Or a ballad singer. Or maybe a bad painter. Or a poet!" She clapped her hands, delighted with her own invention.

"No, you're wrong," Raven said, sharing her laughter. "I wasn't anything of the sort. I was—" He stopped. The headache, momentarily forgotten, now hammered its presence. "I was—none of those—" He couldn't go on.

Suddenly, Lily's laughter was stilled. Her face grew serious. Her hand reached out and touched his arm gently and with understanding.

"But Raven," she said. "I don't expect you to *know*."

He looked at her blankly.

"Nobody really knows," she said softly. "You can't. It isn't the Way."

He stood up, unsteadily.

"Nobody can know who or what they were—before," Lily went on. "Nobody wants to know. You won't either—you'll see."

"But, I—"

"Don't." Lily rose and put her arms around his chest, and this time, he let them enfold him. "It's only my silly game. Anything that happened — before — why, it doesn't matter any more. Not at all. Don't you understand?"

Raven felt the sting of approaching tears. Ashamed, he broke away and turned his back to the girl.

"Don't be sad," said Lily, coming towards him. "It's just the Way."

With a sweep of his arm, Raven wiped away the moisture from his eyes. Suddenly, the pain in his head seemed to lighten. He turned and put his hands on the girl's bare arms. "Of course," he said. "It's the Way, and that's all there is. I'm being stupid. It takes a while—to understand."

Lily said, "Understanding comes easy here."

Raven smiled at her again. Then he laughed.

"What became of our puppy?"

A dozen days passed—or a hundred. There was no counting.

The sun rose and set in a drama that never lost its thrill to Raven. Rose and set,

dawn into dusk—a world, a wonder, a happiness without end. They played, they laughed, they danced; Lily picked her bouquets and never ceased to marvel at their splendor; he joined her in wondrous games in which all creation was the playing field; he listened to marvelous music which seemed to come from every tree and blade of grass. His beard grew long and rich and full, and amazingly (for Raven was dark) gleaming with golden highlights.

This was joy, eternal bliss, ecstasy. This was Heaven!

One day, he asked Lily about the white building.

"It is just there," she said vaguely.

"There for what?"

"I don't know. Look," she said, displaying a tiara of daffodils. "Isn't it pretty?"

"It has a door," he persisted. "What can it be for?"

"No one knows or cares, my blackbird," she answered, placing the tiara on his head. "My, what a crown! I name you Prince Golden Beard!"

"Lily, be serious!" he said.

"Why?"

"Aren't you at all curious?"

"No. Why should I be? Oh, come Raven—let's go to the lake."

"Not now. I'd like to visit the building again. Just for a little while."

"But you've been to the building. It may be just a monument—a landmark for Them."

"For who?"

"The Angels, silly. The guardians. When they fly over us, they need landmarks, I suppose."

"Have you ever seen the Angels?"

Lily's brow puckered in thought. "Not for many sunsets. But they'll be back. They are our guardians."

Raven laughed. "I always thought the guardians of Heaven were the United States Marines."

"The *what*?"

"The Marines." Raven's vision suddenly blurred. He put his head against a tree to steady himself.

"What do you mean, Raven?"

"I—don't know." He put his hand to his eyes. The headache he had once known seemed to be returning, but he concealed his pain from the girl. "It just came into my thoughts. I don't know what it means."

"You're so strange sometimes, Raven. But come on—let's swim before the sunset!"

"Swim." Raven shook himself back into focus. "Yes. That's a good idea."

The next morning, upon awakening, Raven found that he could remember a dream.

He had dreamed that he had climbed the tallest tree of Heaven, and had seen dark clouds approaching. As the clouds came closer, he realized that it was an armada of black angels. They circled above him as he climbed back to the ground in the grip of terror. Then one of the grim angels swooped down and landed at his feet, and with a smile diabolic for such a heavenly messenger, the black figure spoke to him and said:

"Lazarus!"

Even now, in the soul-comforting light he knew as Heaven's Dawn, Raven could hear the black angel's evil laugh as he flew out of his dream.

Every detail of that terrible nightmare remained in his memory, and the fear it inspired remained, too. And with the fear, there came a resolve.

"Lily, what do you think is over there?"

Raven pointed into the distance, beyond the valley of the lake.

"Heaven," said Lily. "More Heaven. Just more of the same, you silly blackbird!"

"Do you know that for sure?"

"What else could there be?" She looked at him innocently.

"I don't know. But I'd like to find out. I *have* to find out."

"You're talking so strangely again, Raven. Why must you find out?"

"I don't know. I feel—restless."

"Maybe you were that bold explorer after all." She tried to change his mood with a laugh. But there was a new thought in Raven's mind.

"Lily," he asked, "where is God?"

"What?"

"Where is He? I want to see Him! This is Heaven—so I want to see God!"

"Raven, don't say such things—" Now there was concern in Lily's voice.

"He may be over there," said Raven, his eyes bright, "and then he may not. But I want to find out, do you understand? I can't help myself. I have to *know*!"

"But it isn't the Way," Lily whispered.

When the next Sleep was over, Raven awoke still re-

solved. Lily was as yet stretching herself awake, her brown hair tumbled about her face. Raven looked at her tenderly. For a moment, his determination weakened at the sight.

"Why?" he asked himself. "Why go?"

Then he knew. "Lazarus," he said aloud.

Raven turned and started for the valley.

He walked and walked. When he was hungry, he plucked the plump fruit from the branches. When he was tired, he stretched out on the grass and gazed at the bright and friendly sky. He walked until the lake was out of sight, until the gentle, familiar sounds he knew faded out of hearing. He walked until he fell exhausted, waiting for the sunset, and the Sleep.

For three sunrises and sunsets he walked before he noticed any difference in the terrain.

Now there seemed to be fewer brooks, and birds, and flowers. The woods became denser, the grass wilder in his path, the rocks and stones cruder than the polished specimens of the terrain he left behind. And most disturbing of all, there

seemed to be fewer fruit-heavy trees to satisfy his growing hunger. Aware of the shortage, he stopped to weave himself an awkward basket of vines, and filled it with fruit as he proceeded on his way. But in time, that supply was depleted, too—and the fruit trees were no longer to be found.

Hunger became a problem, but luck was with him. He startled a squirrel, and the animal scampered into a hole in a tree. Raven reached in after him, and after sustaining a few small bites, managed to locate the squirrel's cache of nuts.

Then a new problem arose. As dusk came on the fifth day of his journey, he discovered with amazement that he was cold.

As the sun began its spectacular descent, the chill was even more apparent, and Raven found himself shivering, praying for the Sleep to come.

But this night, there was no Sleep.

Raven covered himself with leaves, but the blanket was poor protection against the increasing chill. Trembling with both fear and cold, he lay wide-eyed, listening. The night was haunted by strange sounds and sud-

den, staring eyes; flashes of mysterious fire and unnerving snaps of twigs. It was his first unsleeping night in Heaven, a night of bright moonlight and a sky like a jeweler's tray, a night of beauty and indefinable terror.

Then he saw the Angel.

It was flying high, moving among the stars, a whirling speck, bright as the moonlight.

In a shower of leaves, Raven sat up, his heart pounding.

The Angel was coming closer. It was coming down, not more than a mile from Raven's encampment.

The excitement sent heat through Raven's veins. Forgetting the numbing cold and oppressive night, he started running to the Angel's landing place.

In the dark, pebbles became daggers beneath his feet; trees became fortress walls. The soles of his feet were cracked and bleeding, every exposed area of skin was scratched and red before he approached the clearing where the Angel had descended. Breathing heavily, struggling to silence his drumming body, he fell against a giant oak that stood like a great pillar before the arena of grass. And in the center of

the arena, Raven saw the Angel.

It was white, graceful, delicate of limb.

Its shape, though pleasing, was meaningless to Raven.

It was beautiful, and frightening.

His eyes were so busy absorbing the wonder of this heavenly guardian that Raven failed to see the man walking towards it. He heard him first, the voice cracking like a whip in the stillness:

"He was somewhere over there!"

The man was pointing in his direction. He wore, instead of a robe, shirt and trousers. An odd, peaked cap was on his head. Besides the form of the white Angel, he looked small.

Another sharp voice rang out, this time from the Angel itself.

"Well, let's find him!"

Raven trembled violently. He saw the jaws of the Angel part, and from its mouth, another man emerged. And still another voice, deep within Raven's mind, told him the truth of this awesome scene. The white form was no Angel. It was a flying machine!

Almost shrieking with the impact of this suddenly-re-

vealed mystery, Raven turned and blundered his way back into the forest. A quiescent owl awoke with a start, screamed horribly and flew full into his face. He battered at the bird with his hands and was raked across the forehead by its flailing claws. He stumbled, slipped, fell, scrambled back to his feet, and ran like a charging elephant away from the scene. The trees seemed to drop thorny nets in his path, but he crashed through them all. Sleeping birds awoke angrily and screamed their resentment in a hundred terrible voices. Finally, exhausted by the staggering pace, Raven halted, gasped, and stumbled forward into the waiting arms of unconsciousness.

Water, cool on his forehead, brought him awake.

"Oh, Raven!"

It was Lily.

"How—how did you find me? Where are we?"

"I don't know. Somewhere. Beyond the valley."

He saw the sun had risen. He grasped the girl's hands and kissed them feverishly. "Lily! Lily!"

"Raven, I'm so frightened. When you went away, I couldn't bear the thought that you might not return. So I followed you—"

Raven sat up. He touched his aching forehead and felt the blood on it. "You shouldn't have—"

"But this is Heaven, Raven. We're to be happy in Heaven. But I couldn't have been happy without—" She paused.

Raven got to his feet.

"Lily," he said, "there are no Angels. Not here."

She looked at him vacantly.

"Raven, you're not well."

"I didn't sleep last night,

DARK SYMPHONY

Power failures have been known to interrupt concerts. But not at the Al Ringling Theater in Baraboo, Wisconsin. The entire city was plunged into darkness for over an hour but the piano concert, then in progress, went right on. The artist was famed blind pianist, Alec Templeton.



Lily. Do you know what that means? The Sleep didn't take me last night. And I saw one of the Angels. It landed not far from me. I went to it. I saw it."

"Raven, don't talk that way!"

"I tell you it's true! Your 'Angels' are flying machines, Lily! Flying machines made by men! Lily—
"This isn't Heaven!"

Lily put her hands to her ears. "Raven, stop!"

"Listen to me, Lily. Do you remember anything—before?"

"No—nothing!" Her face was screwed with the pain of this argument.

"Do you remember—dying?"

"No! Yes! Oh, I'm not sure, Raven!"

"It's important, Lily. Try and believe me!"

"I remember—something. Something terrible." She looked away from him, her voice quavering. "A man. A black hat. Oh, Raven—please don't make me go on!" Now she was crying, profuse, bitter tears.

"You must!"

"A black hat. I remember that. He was wearing it, pulled down over his face. I couldn't see his face—I didn't want to—"

Her voice grew shrill. "Lily, please!" Raven gripped her arm.

"The man was smiling. He was horrible. He said something to me. I couldn't answer. I gave him something. I know!" She extended her white wrist. "My watch. I gave him my watch.

"Now leave me alone! Get out of here! Leave me alone!"

Lily screamed. She tore herself from Raven's grasp and ran wildly from him. Then she fell, and lay sobbing, her shoulders heaving.

Raven went to her.

"Wait, Mr. Raven."

He turned.

It was a man, in khaki shirt and trousers, with an odd peaked cap on his head. He was pointing a rifle.

Raven's next impressions were blurred into a sequence of strange and hurried events. The apparition he faced held him rooted, while the gentle whirring sound he had heard the night before returned. The "Angel" appeared over them, and landed softly on the grass, its whirling blades still rotating slowly. Commands were shouted, and numbly, Raven climbed aboard. The man in the peaked cap proffered a

helping arm and kindly encouragement. But as quickly as Raven warmed to the kindness, another arm slithered about his neck, and a large hand pressed something soft and wet against his face.

His last thought was of Lily.

He opened his eyes when consciousness returned, but a sense of danger warned him to close them again and feign sleep.

He was aware of dim light through his eyelids, and cool smooth fabric over his body. In the self-created darkness, he listened for identifiable sounds, but heard only the play of wind and leaves. Then came footsteps, and the voices of two men near his bed.

"What have they decided?" one said.

"They're still in conference," said the other.

"Feldmann wants to go whole hog," said the first. "He wants to tell him everything. I don't know, though. It's only three months."

"Yes. But Feldmann thinks this case is different. Well, I've got some work to do."

Raven felt his arm being touched, and his muscles stiffened unwillingly. Grimly, he kept still, even when he realized that the man was

pushing a needle into his flesh.

When he came to again, he opened his eyes and kept them open. A man's face was not three feet from his. It was a broad, open face, large-featured, and unshaven. The eyes were sleepy, but the mouth was firm and determined. Then the man spoke:

"Do you know your name?"

Raven stared at the moving lips. Then he replied. "Raven."

The man leaned back, and Raven quickly appraised his surroundings. It was a small bare room, and he was lying in a narrow bed. There was a strange, medicinal smell that Raven felt was oddly familiar.

The man spoke again.

"Did you ever hear the name Hughes?"

Raven thought hard. "Yes. Someplace. I can't remember where."

"How about Conroy?"

"Yes. Someplace."

"How about Davidson? Lattimore? Grosbeck? Feldmann?"

"Yes," said Raven. "That last one is familiar. Feldmann."

"Who is Feldmann?" said the man.

Raven shook his head. "I don't know. It's just a name, but it's familiar—somehow."

The door opened, and Raven turned to see the man of the peaked hat enter the room. There was a brief whispered conference. When it was over, the questioner turned to Raven again, his mouth set more grimly than before.

"All right," he said. "Raven, are you awake? Try this one. *Lazarus*."

Raven stared. He searched the open, anxious face, and felt the warmth of familiarity flood over him like a gently-breaking wave.

He sighed, so deeply it was almost a moan of pain.

"*Lazarus*," he repeated. "Project Lazarus."

Raven smiled. The big man, whose name was Feldmann, tried to smile back, but his face was too busy with other emotions. He stood up, and took Raven's wrist in his thick hand. There was no resistance as he folded the arm over Raven's chest and said:

"Now you get some sleep."

Three days later, Feldmann reappeared, this time clean-shaven, fresh-shirted, and smiling. Raven was sitting up by then, his mind clearer, his memory stirring.

"You might say that Project Lazarus started in Russia," Feldmann was saying. "We are certain, at any rate, that a Russian made the greatest contribution towards getting it off the ground. His name was Zoblodofsky, and he defected to us in 1959. Is his name familiar?"

"Vaguely," said Raven.

"Well, Zoblodofsky was a man without friends on both sides of the Curtain. During World War II, he was the scientist who conducted certain experiments on the battlefields of Stalingrad that earned him the American newspaper nickname of 'The Ghoul.' Do you remember that?"

"Yes. Yes." Raven hitched himself up further on the pillows. "Resuscitation. Revival experiments."

"That was it," said Feldmann. "Zoblodofsky thought he could—within reason—bring the dead back to life."

Feldmann paused. Raven lifted his hands and stared at them curiously, turning them around and around, studying his fingers.

"We doubt that he ever succeeded," Feldmann continued, "although Zoblodofsky claimed two or three complete revivals. There was no way of telling, of course,

whether they were soldiers brought back from the brink—with heart massage, and so forth—or genuine examples of ‘dead men come back.’

“Nevertheless, his work made decided progress, and when he arrived in America, he continued his studies despite much adverse publicity. He worked alone and in secret, and willed all his notes to his son. His son continued the experiments after his father’s death, until 1974 when he was arrested for—well, we have microfilms of the newspapers of that period, and you can go through those at your leisure.

“At any rate, Project Lazarus wasn’t actually christened until some forty years later, when a documentation of the Zoblodofsky experiments was made by two young bio-physicists named Hughes and Conroy. They published a tome under that title in 2015, and managed to interest quite a few scientists. Specifically, scientists named Davidson, Grosbeck, Lattimore, and a promising young fellow named Leonard Raven.”

Raven grinned at him. “And somebody named Feldmann, too.”

“Yes.” Feldmann stood up and walked to the window.

“Only two of that original group are alive and well,” he said quietly. “Davidson is dead. Grosbeck and Lattimore are with us, but just as truly dead—soulless, mindless, pitiful creatures.”

He spoke darkly, with great bitterness. But as he turned to face Raven again, Feldmann’s face brightened.

“But Len Raven is alive, and well, and sane. And that means Project Lazarus is a success. Do you understand that, Len? More than half a century of work and persecution and failure. *But now we’ve succeeded!*”

“But where was I?” asked Leonard Raven.

“In Heaven. But not the Heaven of the Bible’s promise. A Heaven here on earth, Len, made by the hand of man.”

“It was—beautiful.”

“It should be. It’s America’s largest private estate, a billion-dollar paradise where even the weather is created to suit the will of its owner. And its owner is a man rich enough to buy anything in this world—except life.”

Raven looked up. “Calvin Oates—”

“He volunteered his estate, with all its fantastic equipment, and all the money we

would need for its upkeep, in exchange for the one commodity that wasn't for sale anywhere else. Calvin Oates is eighty-four years old, and frankly, we never believed for a minute that Project Lazarus could give him new life after death."

"But you took the estate."

"We told him nothing but the truth. We told him that all our experiments to date had been failures. Yes, even though we were able to bring Grosbeck and Lattimore back to some sort of life. We told him that he could expect nothing more than living death—but he was willing to take the gamble. He had nothing to lose. We had everything to gain."

"But why—heaven?"

"It started as a crazy suggestion," said Feldmann. "You might even say it was a joke, an idle remark, a wild thought. But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let me start with Lattimore."

"Lattimore was the thirty-fourth experiment. Of course, we never asked our group to sacrifice their lives in the tests. All our studies had been made with recently deceased—heart failures, accidents, even murders. And believe me—those medical students seeking bodies for dis-

section and autopsy in the nineteenth century had an easy time compared to us! Yet we were offering life!

"At any rate." Feldmann brushed a small river of sweat from his forehead. "At any rate, our first twenty-five experiments had been total failures. Our twenty-sixth was our first so-called 'success.' I will never forget that day. It was a young boy, a bicyclist named Adams who had run into an auto. We went through forty hours of treatment, replacing the damaged tissue, repairing the heart, a dozen different and complex techniques. This is no simple process! As I say, it took us forty hours, but at the end of that time, the boy stirred. I tell you, my own heart stopped when I saw that young lip tremble."

Feldmann paused, and his hand gripped the railing of the bed. He swayed dizzily, as he might have on that fateful day.

"When the boy's eyes opened, I could have shouted like Stentor to the world. I wanted to scream and laugh and shout at people in the street. But it was short-lived elation. The eyes opened—and stared."

Feldmann sat down.

"The boy is still alive. But he hasn't stopped staring."

Raven waited until the other man assumed control of his feelings. "What happened?" he asked softly.

"Call it what you will. Madness. Catalepsy. Emptiness. Nothingness."

Feldmann stood up and began his restless pacing.

"It was *shock*!" he said savagely, pounding his fist into his palm. "A strange, terrible shock. The shock of dying, of coming back to life. It was too much for his mind—too much, we found, for any mind.

"We never failed an experiment after that. We had the key. We had the methods. But all we could produce were living dead men—men whose mortal minds could not bridge the gap between—over there, and here."

"Lattimore?" said Raven.

"When Grosbeck and Lattimore died, we experimented with them. All of us have signed a pledge willing our bodies to the Project. Grosbeck died in a motorboat accident on Lake Michigan. Lattimore died of more natural cause—he was eighty-one, if you remember. Both are with us again, but are walked and fed like infants.

"*Shock*!" Feldmann's pounding fist shook the tears out of his eyes. "We had to find a way. We studied the problem frantically, tried everything, thought of everything.

"Then, one day, a small miracle happened. A young fellow, a serious, sober fellow, had a wild thought, a crazy idea, based on childhood dreams, and faith, and the lessons of his parents."

"It was me, wasn't it?"

"Yes, Len. It was you. We talked about it together, remember? Half-seriously, half-joking. We talked about religion, and science, of facts and of belief. We talked about Heaven, Len, you and I."

"Yes," Raven said. "I remember it now."

"We talked about Heaven, and we wondered. What would happen if our dead men awoke where they belonged? Remember how we wondered? Half-seriously—and then, desperately serious, willing to try anything. How strong was faith? Strong enough to bridge the gap? Stronger than shock? Stronger than insanity?"

"We had a hard time with that one, Len. Even our own colleagues. We knew how Zoblodofsky felt, didn't we? Prophets without honor! But

you've been to Heaven, Len. And now you're back on earth."

Feldmann smiled, "Maybe there wasn't any room up there!"

The silvery-white helicopter landed lightly on the velvety grass. Raven stepped out, and watched anxiously as

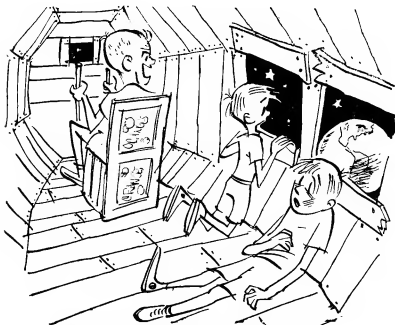
the brown-haired girl came running towards him.

"Raven!"

"Lily!"

They embraced, and kissed. "Raven—" He put his hand over her mouth. "Don't say anything yet. I want you to come with me. I want to tell you something."

THE END



"Wassa matter, didn't ya think it would work?"

They came down from the sky—these strange beings that called themselves Earthlings. They brought us all their superior skills and knowledge and told us we would be the better for learning these things, because they were a superior race. But I knew all of it was leading up to the time when they would—

TEACH ME TO KILL

By ROG PHILIPS

THEY came down from the sky, and it was a very remarkable thing indeed, because their house—they called it a ship—was incredibly heavier than our largest houses and our houses certainly couldn't lift off the ground by themselves. Their huge ship dropped from the clouds like a stone, then fire spilled from it downward like a waterfall, searing the green corn over many acres so that it died, and unbelievably the ship slowed its fall and settled gently to the ground it had just denuded of life.

I was much afraid, but being mayor of our village I didn't want to show my fear, so, alone, I started out toward the strange house from the sky. Behind me I could hear

the drums tap out the encouragement of the village council. The long distance drum began its dull booming, informing the surrounding villages of what was happening.

A peculiar thing happened when I was a hundred feet away. The smooth wall of the house—ship, rather—I shall call it a ship—separated in some manner and part of it hinged downward to form an incline. Down this incline marched several humanoid beings dressed in strange costumes that covered all but their faces. They approached me, speaking in a strange tongue.

I stood still, partly through fear, partly because I felt that in this situation movement was dangerous.



Could a primitive mind cope with modern scientific miracles?

One of them came up to me, smiling and talking in his strange tongue. His tones were soothing. He slipped a hat of thick texture over my head and, miracle of miracles, I could understand what he was saying. I realized at once what the strange hat did. It amplified his ideative thoughts and implanted them on my mind at the same time the sounds of the strange tongue smote my ears, so that it created the illusion in my mind that it was the words themselves which were suddenly making sense.

He was informing me that they were from a land far beyond the sun, that his government owned this planet and had sold it to him and his companions, and that they were taking possession of it. He told me they meant us no harm, that on the contrary they would teach us how to grow better crops and become civilized. He warned me that he and his companions owned our village and all our land, and even us, and if we did not respect their ownership rights and obey their laws, we would be punished. He assured me that our troubles were over, that he and his companions would henceforth take care of us, and all he

asked was for us to let them do so.

It was a strange, almost incoherent speech, and many of his thoughts not connected with his audible speech flowed into me, along with many many words he did not utter. In his mind was much more fear than in mine—strange irrational fears. He feared me because I was less than half his size! He feared me because my skin was of a soft purple texture. He feared the sounds of the drums in the distance. It was a dangerous fear, I sensed, because the slightest thing could easily cause him and his companions to explode into destructive action. I analyzed some of the fears. The color of my skin was associated in his mind with a dread disease of his planet called cancer, and though he knew this disease was not communicable, his fear created a repugnance in him at the thought of even being touched by me.

He was obviously irrational in many respects, so I decided to agree with him in everything, at least for the time being. I told him of my position as mayor of the village and he was quite pleased.

When he took the strange hat off my head I could still understand everything he

said, but I knew that he believed I would have faulty memory, so I pretended not to understand him without the hat on. This pleased him too.

As I walked back to the village I sifted the information I had gleaned and arrived at certain conclusions. These beings from the far planet, Earth, had a very complex picture of us hinging on sharply white and black notions attached to Danger and Safety for them. Without any relation to why we might do something, it would spell danger or lack of danger to them.

One thing was quite clear. They could destroy us utterly. I had no doubts of that. Somehow they had learned how to use natural forces we had never suspected to exist, and they used them indiscriminately for fulfilling their desires whether those desires were for pleasure or for destruction.

The most remarkable thing about them, a thing I would have never been able even to comprehend, let alone see, without having worn that strange hat, was that their minds were broken up into compartments which did not communicate very well with one another. They had elab-

orate mechanisms for tricking themselves, hiding their own inner thoughts from one another. For example, the one I had been able to examine wanted to destroy me, hoped I would do something that he could tell himself was a proper thing to destroy me for. At the same time a separate part of his mind didn't want to destroy me, wanted most fervently to be my friend, and would be very unhappy if it became necessary to destroy me.

These beings were mentally ill in directions where we didn't even have directions, yet among themselves they had set up certain notions which they called *norms*, and by common agreement believed themselves to be *normal*. Perhaps the basic structure of their brains was different from that of ours, though that didn't seem possible.

Back in the village I quickly acquainted the villagers with all that had happened and we were in common agreement after a few discussions. The newcomers were irrational but somewhat predictable within certain areas of reaction. It was possible that they could be helped to mental stability, but it

would take much time. Meanwhile we would have to try to conform to the pattern of behavior their irrationalities had predetermined for us.

That meant first of all that the drums would have to be stilled. Our long distance drummers quickly informed the neighboring villages of this fact so they wouldn't be alarmed at the silence, and we sent messengers to the nearest of the villages to acquaint them with every facet of our problem. Then the drums were silenced.

Next, we would be expected to put on an appearance of care-free natives similar to a pattern they had established on their own Earth. En masse we stripped out family flower plots of their blooms and wove garlands of pleasing appearance. Our musicians gathered in the village square, two-thirds of our populace assembled there loaded down with garlands, and the march started out toward the ship, the musicians playing loudly, the populace skipping along in a semblance of a dance.

While they were gone I took the remaining villagers and began teaching them the new language. From the pattern imposed upon us we

could never let them know we knew their language, of course, but it would be necessary to thoroughly understand what they said in order to check their reactions to our conduct and behavior. It took most of the day to teach my people the language. During the evening the ones I had taught could themselves teach small groups, so that by morning we would all know the new language as well as the visitors knew it themselves. But we must pretend inability to learn, and develop what the newcomers knew as pidgin English, because part of their feeling of security rested on a belief that they were more intelligent than anyone else.

Our plan was simple enough. The beings were themselves too old for any hope of real correction, so we must engage in a long range campaign of pacification, creating in them a complete confidence in us. They would have children, and we could work on the children to some extent, though not completely overcoming the irrationality implanted in them by their parents. The second generation of children would be more susceptible. By the third generation we could be completely open and teach

them complete consciousness—unless the circuits of their brains were constructed wrongly for that. By then we would know.

It wasn't something we particularly wanted to do, it was all we could do. We were left a little dizzy by their strange irrational notions. It seems that a hundred years before their landing a ship belonging to their government landed on our planet and planted a flag, then went back to Earth and recorded the fact with the planet governing body, and that henceforth our planet belonged to the country called the United States, and other nations agreed that it did and stayed away from our planet. Then the United States had sold our planet to those who had just come here, so they owned it. It was all very strange, because I inherited my bit of land from my father, and it had been in my family for many centuries and by tradition could not be sold to anyone until I or one of my descendants died childless.

How they could believe that a series of transactions could in themselves establish either moral or legal ownership is incomprehensible, but they firmly believed it to the ex-

tent that they would have believed us dishonest if we tried to hold onto what was ours. They would have justified any preventive action on their part.

Within a few days they were pacified enough by our consistent pattern of conduct to be bold enough to explore the village in small groups, and even singly. Each of them individually alternately feared us for our smallness and looked down on us as inferior because of our smallness.

Many of them were completely likable, once we became accustomed to their irrational viewpoints. Others of them, one group of four men in particular, seemed basically unlike the others in a secret way. They seemed contemptuous not only of us, but of their own kind, and especially toward the one who had first talked with me and placed the strange hat on my head.

These four would come to the village together, then often separate and explore in a systematic manner as though for some reason they were looking for something. They took small things, surreptitiously instead of asking for them as the others did. Little things, mostly. An

ear ornament, a kitchen knife, a piece of cloth.

Why did they do this? That was a question we could not answer. Perhaps they would have felt embarrassed at asking for them, but when we offered them gifts they refused with a sneer, so we could not understand them, except that they seemed always to be carrying around a Secret that lurked in their contemptuous smile, in the depths of their knowing eyes.

Meanwhile there was much activity emanating from the ship. For this work they had no need of us, evidently. Huge vehicles came down the incline day after day and drove in different directions, unloading at selected sites. Strange machines went to work, erecting gigantic houses of unusual design, and as fast as one was built someone moved in.

Their instructors had been busy teaching us the pidgin English, which was a beautiful combination of repetitious sounds and gestures, the repetitious sounds being simple sounds from their normal language, the gestures conveying meaning by pantomime.

We now learned what our major capacity was to be.

House servants to them. This fit in with our own long range plans very well, and we quickly adapted to this new mode of living, those of us who were selected for these occupations. We had found that so long as we agreed with them completely on everything and obeyed their slightest command they felt safe, but if for any reason any of us disagreed, they immediately believed it an act of hostility.

Of course it was impossible to steer a perfect path through the jungle of their irrationalities, and several of our numbers had been killed over misunderstandings that developed. We have one insect whose bite is fatal, and three of our number were killed by suddenly pushing the beings out of danger when there was no time to warn them—and being shot for our efforts until they learned the truth, then they apologized for having killed some of us.

It was a very narrow path we had to walk, fitting into the pattern of their symbolism, skirting carefully the slightest thing that would trigger their emotions. Our progress was slow, and one major error of judgment by any of us could have brought

the whole structure of friendly relations tumbling down. But of course no such error was possible after the first few days, because it would have had to stem from lack of knowledge on the part of one of us, and we constantly compared notes, discussed every aspect of the new kind of social intercourse thrust upon us, and we were all in agreement on our course of conduct.

Then, suddenly, the unthinkable happened. The one who had first talked with me, John, they called him, was found dead in his bed by one of us who promptly called John's wife. She called others of her kind.

A small sliver of wood was imbedded in John's neck, and when it was pulled out its tip was sticky with some dark substance that they named, in horrified whispers, *curare*. They talked of blowguns and looked around fearfully. An ear ornament which I recognized as belonging to one of the men of the village was found on the ground just outside the bedroom window. It had been taken secretly by one of the four I have mentioned, and reported to me.

Now happened the thing that is beyond belief. All the

servants in John's household were asked to gather in the center of the village. There were fifty of them and they eagerly complied.

The earthlings formed a circle around them, their eyes and expressions grim. I was called and informed of what had happened. I was then informed that because the servants had not kept John from being killed, they must die.

I explained that the weapon of death was unknown to us, that under no circumstances would we—could we—have killed. I pointed out the obvious, that one of their own number must have killed John to take his place of leadership and ownership. They accused me of lying.

Lying is a strange notion, perhaps the strangest of all those possessed by the Earthlings. It consists in being intentionally in error for some purpose, but trying to appear correct for another purpose. While those I loved were being killed for some unknown set of reasons I could not understand, I tried to grasp the complexity of the notion of lying. As with all they touched, these people used the notion in two directions, to protect themselves, and to attack others—some-

times jointly. Many things that had been obscure began to fall into place. The blowgun fitted into their symbolism of a hostile native tribe, the ear ornament outside the window fitted into their notion of evidence, immediately the entire situation was clouded by a superimposed pattern of beliefs. Even the killing of all the servants was a predetermined pattern. It was retaliation coupled with a warning that the servants must protect their masters or die, turning against their own kind if their own kind tried to murder.

This sort of irrationality is utterly complex, outside the realm of valid logic. It had caught us unprepared. While we buried our dead and the servant groups returned to their duties I called a meeting. It was decided that the most learned men of dozens of villages be sent for, and that we study the entire situation together. Their minds, fresh to the problems unfolded, might more swiftly bring order to our understanding.

It was Klogh Blor, may his memory be perpetuated from the lowest vale to the highest peak forever, who reached the root of the problem. He expressed it in these immortal words: "You have as-

sumed that everything that is not logic is illogical. You have assumed that everything that is not rational is irrational. You have forgotten the basic foursquare rule of Creation, that for everything there is an opposite—and for every pair of opposites there is an opposite pair of opposites, making four. The opposite of logic is illogic, the opposite of logic and illogic is supra-logic and supra-illogic. Similarly, the opposite of rationality and irrationality is supra-rationality and irrationality. You have been lumping three distinct things together into a single opposite. These being from Earth are not irrational or illogical completely, but supra-rational and supra-logical as well. It is you who should be the students, not them."

Our greatest minds took his words and studied them. We soon were developing the calculus of illogic, the technique of the separated contradiction. Our whole orientation shifted into the field of thought of the Earthlings. We *explored*.

Meanwhile, under the direction of Klogh Blor, we redesigned our pattern of behavior. Volunteers were called for. Blowguns were

built, and one night several of the volunteers *attacked* the house of one of the four I have mentioned, and were *discovered* by his servants before they could get in. The Earthlings tracked them in the direction of the mountains, caught up with them, and killed them, according to our plan. In this way we recaptured the confidence of the Earthlings, by convincing them that there were savage hill tribes and those savage hill tribes were the *common* enemy. But now the force of Klogh Blor's supralogic emerged, for the four I have mentioned knew very well there were no hill tribes, that the "native" blowguns were exact copies of the one they had made themselves. They could not, of course, point that out to anyone but themselves. Oh beauty of supralogic!

How simple we had been to believe that simplicity and consistency were the criterions of perfection. We had judged these Earthlings by our own standards, and now we knew that our minds had been to theirs as a line of no dimension except as length is to the infinity of space itself.

Even so, we found that some of their techniques are demonstrably inferior, or

seemingly so. We had to explore and gain experience. One of our goals was to attain split consciousness, to limit the conscious mind to a small area of mental activity so that the mind could deceive itself. We found that with certain drugs this could be achieved, and a group was formed in one of the near villages to seriously explore the results. Once the pattern of self deception was established by use of the drug it could be continued without the drug. With several of the experimenters, however, limited consciousness could not be reversed after a time. Very quickly then they began to exhibit all the behavior patterns of the Earthlings, and to reveal clearly to us that limited consciousness is definitely inferior. Only with complete consciousness can the mind properly handle supralogic without becoming its victim.

The experiments, however, enabled us to learn this, and also to gain a closer insight into the workings of the partitioned minds of the Earthlings and the pattern of rationalization that forms the functional basis of that partitioning.

The four I have mentioned

used the pattern of rationalization to the stretching point when confronted with the "evidence" of savage hill tribe natives with blowguns that were exact duplicates of the one they had made. At first they had seen the truth clearly, but they could not face the logical consequences of that clear insight. It meant we had deliberately played their game, that we were therefore their equals—and they could not face that. It would mean to them that we were their superiors, according to their own standards. That meant that we could beat them. That spelled insecurity.

Deep within their clouded minds they calmly reasoned it all out—then began to build a structure to bury it under and restore their sense of security. To them, on second thought, there had to be savage hill tribes. The corpses of the natives with loincloths and their purple skins painted in bright colored designs proved it to their pattern of rationalization. In the end their feeling of insecurity, pushed out of the area of consciousness, became a compelling urge to grasp at anything which would preserve their conscious convictions, even when they knew con-

sciously that they were lying to themselves.

By now our whole planet was being informed of day by day events, and the new science of the mind was spreading like fire. Savants from afar, steeped in the new knowledge, trekked into our village singly and in small parties to study the strange giant beings from another planet, and to observe the victims of our own experiments in divided consciousness first hand.

But now we began a new project in our studies. We must commit a murder and study the effects. We already knew the technique, the rules. It must fit into a pattern of symbology of some kind, so that the Earthlings could seize upon the symbols for security.

A drug was placed in the evening meal of one of the four I have mentioned, and while he was asleep under its effects his gun was given to me by a servant. I went to the house of one of the others of the four, and shot him with it between the eyes. The servant then took the gun and hurried back with it to his master.

The explosion, of course, awakened the household, and

the murdered man's wife called others, and soon they were investigating the murderer.

Oh, it was exciting to watch, and after they had shot the one they believed to be the murderer I was called to explain my reactions to having killed a man to none other than Klogh Blor himself. My every word was recorded and dispatched to all villages. I was indeed a pioneer. No one on our planet had ever been known to kill anything intentionally. There had never been any purpose in doing so.

My report evoked so much interest that many sages trekked from great distances in the hopes of being permitted to personally experience killing an Earthling. Of course that could not be. We set up a committee to plan, and only permitted a murder when a basis of seeming motivation was planted.

The Earth community as a whole began a mass rationalization. The planet was "getting them." There was a "curse on the colony." They wanted to "get out."

This we did not want. We needed them as an anchor for our studies of supralogic so that it did not lose touch with reality and ascend into fancy.

We called a halt to the murders and to all other experiments and projects.

But with the cessation of our enterprises a reaction began to set in within us, a longing to return to the old ways, the peace of our normal way of life. Eventually we decided that we had had enough of the Earthlings.

It was simple enough to be rid of them. Two well calculated murders, and they made up their mind. Those still left, abandoned their permanent houses and boarded the ship. Fire blossomed under it, and it rose slowly, then more swiftly, soon vanishing from view.

After they were gone a new reaction developed—within me, at least. I missed the Earthlings. I missed their bold soarings into supralogic with sure strokes of their mental wings. The efforts of even our most adept were puny beside my memory of the Earthlings.

I began to spend much of my time idly gazing into the sky, hoping to see the ship return. Surely they must miss us and return.

For many years they did not. Then, one day, a dot appeared through the clouds high in the sky. A spot of

glowing fire appeared under it. Once again a ship dropped like a stone, then slowed, to touch the ground gently.

I rushed out to the field, eager to renew acquaintance with the many friends I had made among the Earthlings. Once again the side of the ship opened and hinged down, forming a ramp down which Earthlings strode. But these were not the ones. These were strangers.

One of them advanced toward me while the others stood watchful, ready to destroy with their guns. The one who approached me took out a folded paper and greeted me with a warm smile as he informed me that he and his party had *bought the planet from the former owners!*

Oh beauty of supralogic! And he and his companions had paid a steep price for it, too!

Once again the houses of the Earthlings became centers of activity. Once again the drums of the village became silent to be replaced by runners who carried the news to neighboring villages, where drummers started it on its way around the planet in all directions, so that all could know.

But now, as the days and months passed, a new development was slowly emerging, the traces of it trickling in from distant villages. There were those of us now who had become curious about how the mysterious forces of nature itself could be used, and had been studying these things.

In this I was not interested, being a mayor and by custom of untold centuries not permitted manual work, but I watched its progress and urged some of my villagers to keep pace with it, which they did.

But, just as the theme of activity of the planet had altered, so had that of the Earthlings. These were less fearful, more secure within themselves, more experienced, we began to surmise, with planetary colonization as we had begun to comprehend the term.

Basically, their symbols were not the same, were closer to reality. After they had been with us for some months we built up a motivation for murder between two of them, and permitted a scholar from half way across our planet to experience the act of killing.

Immediately an unexpected development emerged.

They had been waiting for just that. They had brought many instruments with which to examine the evidence, and in a few hours were able to prove conclusively that the Earthling had been killed by one of us. They considered this to be proof that all the murders of the previous owners of our planet had been done by us.

It was interesting to watch how quickly their pattern of rationalization took hold, even with their clear knowledge of the situation. They wished some of us for servants, therefore it must be some of us, not all, who were guilty of the murders.

As individuals they diverged in their cumulative reactions, some of them recognizing that the basic threat to them sprung from our race, and not from just a few individuals of our race, and some of them rationalizing this into submergence under the wish pattern of safety in ignorance.

We held a meeting and decided to wipe them out. The scientists that had sprung up in our villages actually decided the issue, being tired of getting information in little trickles and being unable to examine the spaceship itself.

All the Earthlings were

murdered at a predetermined time so that they could not prepare defenses. Since it was to be simple slaughter it was done with short blow-guns and small splinters impregnated with curare which the first Earthlings had shown us how to prepare while trying to prove to themselves that that first murder on our planet had been done by a native.

Oh beauty of supralogic! How happy I am! But I must explain. With the Earthlings just so many corpses to be cremated, the ship and the houses and all their contents were open to all on the planet. Scholars from the far corners and remote villages came to study and examine, and to return to their homes and begin the new progress. In the mountains were uncovered bodies of ore as the books foretold, and vast industries were built according to the procedures developed in the books.

Our way of life changed. The drums were silenced for good, replaced by electronic beams carrying image and voice around the planet in less than a second. Ships rose from depots and circled to distant points in a matter of hours. Forces of nature we had never suspected were

tapped and controlled, and developed far beyond what even the books predicted.

We found many errors in the theories explaining these forces, in the books, but of course we are a long-lived race and can spend centuries mastering a subject, while the Earthlings seem to die just at their peak of usefulness. Myself, for instance, I was less than two centuries of age when the first Earthlings arrived, and now I am at my full prime of seven centuries, and have already done my duty to the race in siring sons and daughters of my wives.

And now, I cannot contain myself any longer. Oh wonderful Klogh Blor, may he be eventually worshipped as the father of the Universe!

I have just bought the Earth. That is what I have been waiting to say. Under the new planetary law I traded my ancestral acres to the government for it and have the deed here beside me, and the ships and my villagers and thousands of friends who have joined their destinies to mine.

And tomorrow we go to take possession of our new home.

THE END



THE SPACE CLUB

Where Space-Minded Pen Pals Meet

► *Quoting the eminent Dr. Richardson, of the Palomar and Mt. Wilson Observatories: "If somebody is lonely, or wants to get married or something . . . , I advise joining a Science Fiction Club. Because the people who are interested . . . in space creatures aren't going to be bothered if the opposite sex is a certain age or color or so tall or so short. . . ."*

An interesting concept. We can't say whether the good Doctor is right or wrong, but his observation certainly highlights some of the advantages of grabbing a pen and getting a few letters into the mail. Also, don't neglect to send in your own name.

MRS. E. ARELLANO, 1224 S. SPAULDING AVE., CHICAGO, ILL. . . . Mrs. Arellano says, "Put me in The Space Club to get loads and loads of letters."

KATHRYN BARR, P. O. BOX 4649, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF. . . . Kathryn is 30 years old, has long brown hair and gray-green eyes. She would like to write letters and trade books with someone from London. She will answer any letters she gets from foreign and U. S. fans.

ZITA CARNO, 2020 CRESTON AVE., BRONX 53, N. Y. . . . 22 years old, Zita is a symphonic musician and an inveterate baseball fan. She enjoys reading science fiction particularly humorous tales and those dealing with ESP, telepathy, hypnotism.

KEN DAVIES, APT. 37, 1660 BATHURST ST., TORONTO 10, ONT., CANADA. . . . Ken wishes to hear from young ladies interested in space fiction.

RICHARD T. DOODY, C/O GENERAL DELIVERY, VIOLA, ARKANSAS. . . . Richard is 19 years old. He has been reading science fiction for about 5 years. He'd like to hear from other s-f readers.

DALE L. DUNCAN, 215 MURPHY ST., JONESVILLE, MICH. . . . 15 years old, Dale enjoys s-f tremendously. Other hobby is stamp collecting.

MRS. CATHERINE FOLEY, 461 ST. JOHNS RD., TORONTO 9, ONT., CANADA. . . . A 26-year-old housewife, Catherine has 2 pre-school children. Her husband is a machinist.

JOHN FOX, 37-06 72ND, NEW YORK, N. Y. . . . 17-year-old John collects science fiction and has a thousand items in his collection. He is an advanced chemistry student.

LLOYD GILMORE, 376 ELLIS ST., SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF. . . . Lloyd is a regular s-f fan now. He's particularly interested in seeing all the

s-f movies that come out. 27 years old, 6'1", he has brown hair and blue eyes. Another of his hobbies is photography.

ANA GLORIA MARTINEZ, 1521 S. W. 13TH ST., MIAMI, FLA. . . . A second-year pre-med student at the University of Miami, Ana is 5'1", 105 pounds, is 19 years old. Ana is very interested in finding some of Edgar Rice Burroughs' science fiction. Anyone who can help her?

BLAINE MASSING, Box 477, MISSION CITY, B. C., CANADA. . . . 15-year-old Blaine has many hobbies: stamp collecting, coin collecting, making model cars, planes, ships. He's also a sports enthusiast.

CHANEL MONAGHAN, 236 COLUMBIA PLACE, LOS ANGELES 26, CALIF. . . . Chanel states the following: Interested in science fiction, especially UFOs and ESP stories. Has a writer's correspondence club off to a good start. Interested in forming an International Science Fiction Fan Club and an International Hobbyists Club.

ROGER G. PERREAULT, 4041 41ST AVE. SOUTH, SEATTLE 8, WASH. . . . Roger will be happy to answer any letters received from other members of The Space Club. He is 23 years old and a bush pilot who has flown in almost all countries and Alaska.

IRWIN PURISCH, 765 F. D. R. DR., NEW YORK 9, N. Y. . . . 37 years old, 6', brown hair, hazel eyes, Irwin is with the New York City Fire Dept. as a radiological instructor. He is also an active Air Force Reservist interested in nuclear science. He has been reading science fiction for over 20 years. He is also interested in stamps.

MARGARET RODGERS, LA COSA BELLA #9 3421 LORISSA DR., LOS ANGELES 26, CALIF. . . . 25 years old, 5'6" Margaret has brown hair and blue eyes. She is a very avid reader of s-f. Her other interests are sports, music, coins, stamps, postcards, hi-fi.

GEORGE R. ROMANO, 10 GRANT ST., UTICA, N. Y. . . . 26 years old and a senior in college, George is interested in physics and botany. He is 5'6", has dark hair and dark eyes. He wants to correspond with s-f fans in Spanish or English.

A/1C MICHAEL SAVAGE, 16TH A.D.S., WHITEMAN AFB, MISSOURI. . . . 22 years old, 6', black hair dark brown eyes, 180 pounds. Hobbies: music, s-f, sports cars. Would like to hear from kindred souls, preferably female.

BOB SERGEANT, 2902 ST. PAUL ST., INDIANAPOLIS 3, IND. . . . Bob is a fan interested in trading magazines from other countries. He is 15 years old.

JULIANNA STALLER, 1571 EAST 45TH ST., CLEVELAND 3, OHIO. . . . A junior in high school, Julianna is 17 years old, 5'7", blond hair, blue eyes. She enjoys most sports.

MARVIN SWAN, JR., 3703 SO. 141 ST., SEATTLE 88, WASH. . . . Astronomy and science fiction are Marvin's main hobbies. He also enjoys chess and exploring. He is 16 years old.

JUNE E. WEIDEMANN, 607 SO. JACKSON ST., NEW ATHENS, ILL. . . . 37 years old, married, has 3 children. June is mostly interested in stories about wild talents and psychic ability. She is organizing a group interested in the psychic and ESP field.

JEANNE B. WILSON, 658 SOUTH 5TH EAST, BRIGHAM CITY, UTAH. . . . Jeanne is married, has five children, 2 boys and 3 girls. She is 31 years old. Her hobbies include reading, and collecting horse figurines.

JIM YOUNG, BOX 322, HENNEPIN, ILL. . . . Jim is 15 years old, 6'2", weighs 185, has black hair and blue eyes. His main interests are: astronomy (has a 3" reflector) parapsychology, time travel, star travel and s-f in general.



ROGUE IN SPACE. *By Fredric Brown.* 189 pp. Dutton & Co. \$2.75.

Psychologists explain why one book holds us enthralled, and another leaves us emotionless: they call it "reader identification," i.e., the ability to imagine ourselves the heroes or heroines of the books we read. Now there have been many likeable rascals in fiction, picaroons with whom we could identify ourselves. Offhand, I can think of Long John Silver and Gil Blas, to cite only two. But there must be some basic, likeable tie to bind reader and character together.

Mr. Brown asks us to identify ourselves with a rogue, a thief, drunkard, brawler, and murderer—one whose qualities are unrelieved by humor, tenderness, passion, or humanity; to make Mr. Brown's latest crime even more agonizing, this "protagonist" is as ineptly delineated and as poorly realized as any I have read about in fiction. With "Rogue In Space," Mr. Brown has pinned upon his chest the Spillane Medal of Honor, First Class.

Crag, the excrescence of which I speak, is framed for one of the rare crimes he has not committed, then is freed by his judge in order that he may steal an invention which will allow the judge to become Ruler of the Universe. Disliking R.'s of the U., Crag kills the judge, the judge's wife, and finally, on page 98, dies himself.

On page 99 he comes back to life—due to the good offices of a sentient asteroid whom we shall call (for the sake of clarity, although the author calls the asteroid by no name at all) Jas-

per. Getting to know the sweet, loveable, trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, thrifty, cheerful, brave, clean, and reverent soul which lies beneath Crag's craggy exterior, Jasper decides that this is *just* the thing he's been looking for to colonize himself. So he forms a planet out of asteroidal debris, and invites Crag to settle him once and for all. Crag fights this mad, mad urge, but after approximately 91 more pages of drinking, fighting, scheming and murdering, he decides to do the right thing by Jasper.

Note to Fredric Brown: Are you kidding?

Note to Jasper: After this, mind your own business.

POLICE YOUR PLANET. *By Eric van Lhin. 224 pp. Avalon Books. \$2.50.*

Here again is a follower of that great, modern literary movement known as "I'll write anything for a fast buck." But where Fredric Brown deserves the First Class Spillane Medal, Eric van Lhin (come out from behind that beard, Eric, I know who you really are) deserves only Second, or perhaps Third Class.

The story, if it can laughingly be called that, is concerned with one Bruce Gordon, ex-fighter, ex-gambler, ex-policeman, and ex-reporter, who has been exiled to Mars. On that corrupt planet he can redeem himself by becoming a spy for the Security Department of Earth. So that he may have a perfect "cover," Bruce becomes a member of Mars' police force, and ultimately helps break up the gang-ridden society after he has been beaten up, shot at, caught glimpses of enough palpitating female flesh, and betrayed enough to make the par for this course.

ANYTHING FOR A GAG

You've no doubt heard of burglaries during which everything was taken but the kitchen sink? Thieves in the home of Joe Einzig did a switch on this theme. Seems the kitchen sink was all they were after. They got it.

Test Your Space I. Q.

To qualify for a place on the first rocket to the moon, you would need a high-voltage mastery of the fields of selenography (or moonology) and rocket-propulsion. The following quiz will touch upon some of the high points involved. If you can fill the 20 blanks correctly, you may be Captain of a future rocket ship. Fifteen and over would make you a dependable crew member and 12 is about right for the cabin boy. Anything below 12 indicates that you should brush up on your moon-gazing.

1. In the famous play of the same name Cyrano de Bergerac stated seven ways of going to what satellite? _____
2. _____ was the Father of rocket propulsion in the United States.
3. The first famous science-fiction classic to become a movie was _____.
4. This movie was written by _____.
5. "The Man Who Sold the Moon" was written by _____.
6. The first manned rocket-propelled plane was the _____.
7. The gray plains observable on the moon's surface are known as _____.
8. The largest of these plains is _____.
9. A Greek philosopher _____, (100 B.C.) invented the first jet propulsion device.
10. This device was known as the _____.
11. _____ was the first man to look at the moon's surface through a telescope.
12. Alcohol and _____ are liquid rocket propellants.
13. The mean distance of the moon to the earth is _____.
14. The moon is _____ miles in diameter.
15. The reason that a turbo-jet engine cannot be used to propel a rocket to the moon is that it requires _____ for one of its fuels.
16. When the moon is between the earth and the sun in what phase is it? _____.
17. When the moon is exactly between the earth and the sun there is an _____.

18. The research station where most of the German rocket development was conducted before and during W. W. II was called _____.
19. The director of this research station was _____.
20. "The Moon and Sixpence" is a fictionalized version of the life of the painter _____.

Answers

1. The moon.
2. Dr. Robert H. Goddard. A professor of physics at Clark University in Worcester, Mass., he experimented with rocket propulsion, aided by grants from the Guggenheim Foundation.
3. "A Trip to the Moon."
4. Jules Verne. In 1902, Georges Melies, a French movie pioneer, made the first narrative motion picture from this famous novel. A section of the movie is included in the introduction to Mike Todd's "Around the World in 80 Days."
5. Robert A. Heinlein. It is the title of a short novel and also the title of a collection in which it is included.
6. The Bell X-1 (1946). It has been superseded by the Bell X-2.
7. *Morio*, or seas. The ancients thought they were bodies of water and the name is still used by astronomers.
8. *Oceanus Procellarum* (Ocean of Storms).
9. Hero of Alexandria—the Chinese are credited with inventing the rocket several centuries earlier, but no records are available.
10. Aeolipile. It consisted of a sphere containing steam, which rotated about an axis and was driven by two jets arranged in opposite directions in a plane perpendicular to the axis of rotation.
11. Galileo, 1610.
12. Liquid oxygen. The German V-2 first used them successfully in an operational vehicles.
13. 238,857—the distance varies from 222,000 to 253,000 because of the eccentricity of the moon's orbit.
14. It is actually 2,160 miles.
15. Air. Space contains insufficient oxygen to "feed" this engine.
16. New moon. It is then invisible. The sun falls on the side away from the earth and it is further obscured by the glare of the sun.
17. Eclipse of the sun. The moon's disc is then silhouetted against the sun.
18. Peenemünde on the Baltic Sea. The V-2 was developed there.
19. Dr. Werner von Braun. He's now an American citizen and a leading scientist in the rocket development program of the Air Force.
20. Gouguin.



...OR SO YOU SAY

BY THE READERS

Dear Editor:

This is indeed an unusual occasion—I can't find anything wrong with the March issue of *Amazing*. The cover was the best I've seen on any prozine. All the stories were great too. I'm looking forward to equally good repeat performances.

Richard Brown
127 Roberts St.
Pasadena 3, Calif.

• *And when you do find something wrong, Mr. Brown, be sure and write in your gripe. We watch for beefs just as eagerly as compliments.*

Dear Editor:

Only have one gripe about the March issue. I didn't like the cover at all. The girl and the city were fine, but oh, that monster. Remember Cecil and Beany old TV and comic favorites with youngsters? Well, the monster looked just like Cecil. Ask V. to do better.

Edward Gorman, Jr.
119 1st Ave., S.W.
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

• *You're very discerning, Edward. Our cover monster—name of Toodles—is a close relative of Cecil although they aren't speaking at the moment. Seems Cecil did Toodles out of*

a house haunting job he had lined up. Anyhow, we had King Kong's brother set for the March cover job, but Toodles needed work so bad we gave him the job.

Dear Ed:

I liked every story in the March *Amazing*. Covers with girls and cute monsters like this one appeal to me.

Hey, what happened to all the cartoons? Keep them in. I'm also very much in favor of the Space Club. I've met some wonderful girls through it. Haven't had much luck with the fellows though, they better get busy.

Marvin Pfeifer

R.R. 1

Paw Paw, Illinois

• *More cartoons are coming. Glad you like the Space Club. If the boys are too busy to write we'll just have to struggle along with a lot of nice girls. Now isn't that tough?*

Dear Editor:

I think you have been filling your pages with some darn good material. I do have one gripe though. Why must you have serials? By the time I get to the end of the first installment, I want to find out what happened next without waiting. Then, too, if I try to save up all the issues so that I can read them in one sitting my oldest boy has decided that he wants to cut out one of your BEM's or one of my daughters has found out that *Amazing Stories* makes delightful confetti.

Jeanne Wilson

658 South 5th St. East

Brigham City, Utah

• *You're one of the majority, Jeanne, and your word is law. No more serials—unless one comes along that's just so darned good we can't help ourselves.*

Dear Editor:

In the March issue there appears a story, "S.R.O.," by Ellis Hart. At one point in the story, the protagonist, Bart Chester, was in need of fast money for a business deal, so he proceeded to phone friends and relatives for loans. Fifteen minutes later,

after calling up eight or so people, he is in possession of \$4,520. Now, I ask you: could such a thing possibly happen in "real life"? It seems strange that people would be willing to shell out that much money at a moment's notice. But perhaps Chester has rich friends . . .

No more of these improbable things—please!

Allen Mann

1090 Grand Concourse

Bronx, N.Y.

• *You're just being modest, Mr. Mann. Bet you could go out and raise twice that much in half the time. You just haven't tried. If you ever decide to, let us know how you come out.*

Dear Editor:

I don't know what some of these old goats have to grumble about in Valigursky's art work. I think he's the best there is.

"Amazing But True . . ." is quite a twist but real enjoyable.

The Space Club is a terrific idea. The one who thought of it deserves a hand and a bonus.

I favor longer stories, more jokes and of course more pages.

Walter Orlandini

5959 W. Grace

Chicago 34, Illinois

• *Mr. Davis—please note that bit about a bonus.*

Dear Editor:

After my life was disrupted by the Army a few years ago I lost contact with your fine publications. Recently I came across a copy of *Amazing* and was pleased to see you're still running the same high quality stories. Too bad you can't afford the amount of paper you used to use; those long novels were so much better complete.

I noticed you have many new and young readers now inquiring about the "Shaver Mysteries" and other famous stories of the past. For their benefit I would like to say that I have a great many copies of fantasy and s-f mags. that I would be happy to sell to the fans, rather than just dispose of them. Those who are looking for some of the old and rare

magazines might write to me and I may be able to supply them with what they want.

Dave Prosser
1533 Euclid Avenue
Steubenville, Ohio

Dear Editor:

In your October '56 issue of *Amazing* you have an excellent story titled "Judas Valley," by Gerald Vance. This is the type of science fiction that came out in the beginning and it is by far the best. I mean by that that it's not silly, incomprehensible or overly drawn.

If you are interested in captivating women, and I think you are, may I suggest that your artists portray the main characters of a story in a vivid and not abstract way. I notice I hardly glance at the stories with the ultra modern drawings—they are so ugly I get no interest in the characters, and my friends seem to feel the same way. May I say here that the old pulps had, usually, extremely fine drawings—almost as if engraved—and they certainly portrayed the "Flash Gordon-and-Gale" of s-f beautifully. I remember well the thrill I used to get when looking through my brother's mags. And that is exactly how I became an s-f fan.

Mrs. F. H. Bartlett
31 Gardner St.
Allston 34, Mass.

• *We were glad to get this letter because realism in a science-fiction book—or any fiction book for that matter—is our pet peeve. We hammer at our artists to make the people in their illos look the way people really look. We have no quarrel with abstract art. We just feel it belongs in museums—not in fiction books.*

Dear Editor:

I have just finished reading Ellison's "The Savage Swarm" in the March issue. That is my idea of *real* s-f. The only gripe I have is that it was not nearly long enough. Boy, what a novel this would make!

I took you up on that Space Club bit. I wrote to a guy, sent him a snapshot of myself, and asked for a picture of him.

But, no go. He said he didn't have any. What was it Alan Dodd said about aliens from outer space never having their picture made? Oh, well, at least it does show that you have widespread circulation.

Johnny Holleman
Box 77
Choudrant, Louisiana

• *You're right. Ellison is one of the best. Uncle Sam has tagged this boy and we're trying to get all the stories we can from him before he goes into the Army.*

Dear Editor:

This is the first issue of *Amazing* that I have read. I am a fan of s-f but have until now only enjoyed s-f in full length novels. I decided, just for kicks, to try a few s-f magazines and finally found a couple I liked. *Amazing* rates as tops with *Fantastic* a close second. I especially like "Think Yourself to Death" along with "Savage Swarm."

Bob Bamenfeind
Pattison Park, Wis.

• *Your first issue, eh? Welcome aboard. And stick with us, chum, for a long happy ride among the stars.*

Dear Editor:

The new *Amazing* came out and you can imagine my surprise as soon as I saw the beginning of the sequel to "Empire of Evil." But my joy soon doubled as soon as I saw that a magazine called *Amazing Stories* Novels is coming out. I hope it's pulp, because there's only one magazine on the stand now like that.

Thanks for clearing me up on the Jorgensen-Silverberg rumor.

Donald Kent
3800 Wellington
Chicago, 18, Illinois

• *Wait until you read "20 Million Miles to Earth," Donald. You're in for a tremendous thrill. And you'll find it up to the high standard *Amazing Stories* has set through the years.*

Dear Ed:

In South Africa science-fiction publications are unobtainable and even second-hand copies are extremely hard to get. Perhaps some of your readers may have back issues that they wish to sell or trade. Any help in this direction would be greatly appreciated.

E. G. Compton-James
c/o Box 243
Durban
Natal, South Africa

• *See Mr. Prosser's letter elsewhere in this department, sir. It will no doubt answer your problems.*

Dear Editor:

From Spain I send you my cordial salutes and friendship offer. I'm a Spaniard who's learning English and I've just known the February and March issues of *Amazing Stories* whose reading (that I consider most interesting and pleasant) helps me very much to study your idiom, fascinating me at once. Among the different stories—which compose these little books, it's difficult to choose and proclaim the best of them. After thinking profoundly, I like especially "Disaster Revisited" in that of March.

Thus, I'll follow acquiring assiduously your s-f mag. while it can be bought here. I'm waiting for the first number of *Dream World*, but I believe it won't be sold in Spain.

I beg for your pardon about my terrible English.

Miguel Garrido
Padre Manjon, 38, B.
Valladolid, SPAIN

• *Thank you very much for writing, Señor Garrido. Your letter does us honor. We are happy to be of assistance to you in learning our language via Amazing Stories. One thing, though. You'll probably end up knowing Martian, Venusian, and three dialects of Neptunian. That's how science fiction is.*



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continued from Back Cover

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2. Since its gravity is weaker than Earth's, on the Moon you would weigh: more — less than on Earth.
3. The Moon is really a: star — satellite — planet.
4. Distance to the Moon is about: 93,000,000 miles — 238,000 miles — 9,000 miles.
5. Scientists have proved that human life does — does not exist on the Moon.
6. Surface of the Moon is rough — smooth — covered with water.

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